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SERMONS

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Various Subjects;

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- I. II. III. The Inward Witness of Christianity.
IV. Flesh and Spirit; Sin and Holiness.
V. Drawing nigh to GOD in Prayer.
VI. Sins and Sorrows spread before GOD.
VII. VIII. A Hopeful Youth falling short of Heaven.
IX. X. The Hidden Life of a Christian.
XI. Nearness to GOD the Felicity of Creatures.
XII. The Scale of Blessedness; or, Blessed Saints, Blessed Saviour, and Blessed TRINITY.
XIII. XIV. Appearing before GOD.

W H E R E I N

Many Things relating to *Christian Experience*, and the *Future State*, are set in a fair and easy Light.

Together with

A SACRED HYMN annexed to each Subject.

By I. WATTS.

The Third Edition. *Volume 1*

L O N D O N,

Printed for JOHN CLARK and RICHARD HETT, at the Bible and Crown in the Poultry, near Cheapside; EMAN. MATTHEWS, at the Bible in Pater-noster-row; and RICHARD FORD, at the Angel in the Poultry, near Stocks-Market. M.DCC.XXV.

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T O T H E
 C H U R C H *of* C H R I S T
 Assembling in *Berry-street, London.*

Christian Friends, Dearly Beloved in our Lord ;

I S in the Service of Your Souls that
 I have spent the best Period of my
 Life, *ministring the Gospel among*
 you. Two and Twenty Years are
 now expired, since you first called
 me to this delightful Work ; and from that time
 my Cares and Labours, my Studies and Prayers,
 have been employed in your Behalf. I trust they
 have been accepted with God, and, through his
 Almighty Blessing, have obtained some Success.
 As to their Acceptance with you, I have too
 many and plain Evidences to admit a doubt of it ;
 which I have often thankfully acknowledged to
 God and you. Your forward Kindness hath always
 forbid my Requests ; nor do I remember that you
 ever gave me leave to ask any Thing for my self at
 your Hands, by your constant Anticipation of all
 that I could reasonably desire.

While I was thus walking among you in the
 Fellowship of the Gospel with mutual Delight,
 God was pleased to weaken my Strength in
 the Way, and thereby has given you a fairer

*Opportunity to show the Vigour of your Affection under my long Weakness and Confinement. Your Diligence and Zeal in maintaining Publick Worship in the Church, under the Pastoral Care of my dear Brother and Colleague *, your special Days and Hours of Prayer for my Recovery, your constant and fervent Addresses to the Throne of Grace on my Account in your weekly solemn Assemblies, and your chearful Supply of my Necessities under so tedious an Affliction, have made me your Debtor in a high Degree, and have strengthen'd the Bands of my Duty, by adding to them the Bands of your Love.*

As soon as I was capable of the smallest Attempt of Service, you received me with all Joy in the Lord: And tho' we were Rivals in this Pleasure, yet you will allow that my Joy was, at least, equal to yours; for I think I can pronounce it with great Sincerity, that There is no Place, nor Company, nor Employment, on this side Heaven, that can give me such a Relish of Delight, as when I stand ministring Holy Things in the midst of you.

As fast as my Health encreases, you may assure your selves it is devoted to your Edification. It often grieves me to think how poor, feeble, and short, are my present Labours among you; and yet what Days of Faintness I generally feel after every such Attempt: so that I am continually prevented in my Design of successive Visits to you, by the want of

* Mr. Samuel Price.

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active Spirits while I tarry in the City; and yet if I attempt to stay but a Week or ten Days there, I find a sensible Return of Weakness; so that I am constrained to retire to the Country-Air, in order to recruit and maintain this little Capacity of Service.

I bless God heartily, and you are my Witnesses, that in my better Seasons of Health heretofore, and in the Intervals of my Studies, I was not a Stranger to your private Families, nor thoughtless of your Souls Improvement.

What shall I do now to make up these Defects? What can I do more pleasing and profitable to you, than to seize the Advantages of my Retirement, to review some of those Discourses which have assisted your Faith and Joy in my former Ministry, and to put them into your Hands? Thus something of me shall abide with you in your several Houses, while I am so incapable of much publick Labour, and of personal Visits.

This, my Friends, is the true Design of sending this Volume to the Press: and tho' many of my Brethren may compose far better Sermons than I, (whose Persons I love and honour, and their Labours I read with Reverence and Improvement) yet I am persuaded, that Share which I have in your Affections, will render these Discourses at least as agreeable to your Taste, as those of superior Excellency from other Hands. If any other Christians shall think fit to peruse them, and find any spiritual Benefit, they must make their Acknowledgments to God and you.

I cannot invite the loose and fashionable Part of Mankind, the young Censors of the Age, and the Deriders of the Ministry, to become my Readers: Too many of them grow weary of Christianity, and look back upon Heathenism with a wishful Eye, as the Jews did of old upon the Leeks and Onions of Egypt, when they grew angry with Moses, and began to loath the Bread of Heaven. These Persons will find but little here that suits their Taste; for I have not entertained you with Lectures of Philosophy, instead of the Gospel of Christ; nor have I affected that easy Indolence of Style which is the dry Delight of some modish Writers, the cold and insipid Pleasure of Men who pretend to Politeness. You know it has always been the Business of my Ministry to convince and persuade your Souls into practical Godliness, by the clearest and strongest Reasons derived from the Gospel, and by all the most moving Methods of Speech, of which I was capable; but still in an humble Subserviency to the promised Influences of the Holy Spirit. I ever thought it my Duty to press the Conviction with Force on the Conscience, when Light was first let into the Mind. A Statue hung round with Moral Sentences, or a Marble Pillar with Divine Truths inscribed upon it, may preach coldly to the Understanding, while Devotion freezes at the Heart: But the Prophets and Apostles were burning and shining Lights; they were all taught by Inspiration to make the Words of Truth glitter like Sun-Beams, and to operate like a Hammer, and a Fire, and a two-edged Sword.*

Sword *. *The Movements of Sacred Passion may be the Ridicule of an Age which pretends to nothing but calm Reasoning. Life and Zeal in the Ministry of the Word, may be despised by Men of luke-warm and dying Religion: Fervency of Spirit in the Service of the Lord †, may become the Scoff and Jest of the Critick and the Profane: But this very Life and Zeal, this Sacred Fervency, shall still remain one bright Character of a Christian Preacher, till the Names of Paul and Apollos perish from the Church; and that is, till this Bible, and these Heavens are no more.*

In some of these Discourses indeed I have not had the Opportunity of so warm and affectionate an Address to the Hearers. A true and just Explication of Scripture, and a convincing Proof of the Doctrines proposed, have been the chief Things necessary; yet I have endeavoured, even there, to give a practical and pathetick Turn, as far as the Design of the Text would bear it: But in the other Sermons I blame my self more for the Want of Zeal and devout Passion, than for the Excess of it.

I will readily confess, there are here and there some Periods where the Language appears a little too elevated, tho' not too warm; I know 'tis not the proper Style of the Pulpit; but there is some difference between Speaking and Writing: In one the Ear must take in the Sense at once; in the other, the Eye may review what the first Glance did not fully receive. Besides, my friendly Readers

* 2 Cor. iv. 4, 6.
Heb. iv. 12.

John v. 35.
† Acts xviii. 25.

Jer. xxiii. 29.
Rom. xii. 11.

will now and then indulge a Metaphor, to one who, from his youngest Years, has dealt a little in Sacred Poesy.

You are my Witnesses, that in the common Course of my Ministry, I often press the Duties of Sobriety and Temperance, Justice and Charity, as well as the inward and spiritual Parts of Godliness. But since Treatises on these latter Subjects are seldom published now-a-days, I have permitted the Matters of secret Converse between God and the Holy Soul, to take up a larger Share in these Discourses; and it has been by Aim to rescue those Arguments from the Charge of Enthusiasm, and to put them in such a Light, as might shew their perfect Consistence with common Sense and Reason. Hereby I have done my Part to defend them against the daily Cavils of those low Pretenders to Christianity, who banish most of these Things from their Religion, and yet arrogate and confine all Reason to themselves.

There are excellent Sermons published already, which teach us the Laws of Sobriety, the Rules of Charity and Justice, our Duty to our Neighbour, and our Practice of Publick Religion; but 'tis my Opinion that Experimental Piety, and the Work of the Closet, should sometimes entertain the Church and the World. Our Fathers talked much of pious Experience, and have left their Writings of the same Strain behind them: They were surrounded with Converts, and helped to fill Heaven apace; for God was with them. But I mourn to think that some are grown so degenerate

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generate in our Days, as to join their Names and their Works together in a common Jest, and to ridicule the Sacred Matter of their Sermons, because the Manner had now and then something in it too mystical and obscure, and there is something in their Style unfashionable and unpolished.

It must be acknowledged indeed, to the Honour of the present Age, that we have some Pretences above our Predecessors, to Freedom and Justness of Thought, to Strength of Reasoning, to clear Ideas, to the generous Principles of Christian Charity; and I wish we had the Practice of it too. But as to the Savour of Piety, and inward Religion, as to Spiritual-Mindedness, and Zeal for God, and the Good of Souls; as to the Spirit and Power of Evangelical Ministrations, we may all complain, The Glory is much departed from our Israel. Happy the Men, who are so far assisted and favoured of God, as to unite all these Excellencies, and to join the Honours of the past and present Age together! How far it has been attempted amongst you, I have a Witness in your Consciences: and tho' I keep a sincere and painful Sense within me of my great Defects on either side, yet I must still pursue the same Attempt; and with Reverence and Zeal I beg leave to trace the Footsteps of my Brethren, who come nearest to this shining Character.

In all these Things I rejoice, and can't conceal my Joy, that my kind and faithful Companion in the Service of your Souls, practises his Ministry with the same Views and Designs; and he hath been

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been sensibly own'd and assisted of God, to support, and to build up the Church, during my long Confinement. His Labours of Love both for you, and for me, shall ever endear him both to me and you. May the Divine Blessing gloriously attend his double Services in the Seasons of my Absence and painful Restraint! May your united Prayers prevail for my Restoration to the full Exercise of my Ministry among you! And may you all receive such lasting Benefit by our associated Labours, that you may stand up, and appear as our Crown and our Joy in the Great Day of the Lord! This is the continual and hearty Prayer of,

My dear FRIENDS,

Your Affectionate and Afflicted

Servant in the Gospel,

5 DECE

Theobalds, in Hertfordshire,
Feb. 21st. 1720-21.

I. WATTS.



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SERMONS

ON

Various Subjects, &c.

SERMON I.

The Inward Witness to Christianity.

I Ep. JOHN V. 10.

*He that believeth on the Son of God,
bath the Witness in himself.*

The First Part.

HERE are two Points of great
and solemn Importance, which
it becomes every Man to en-
quire into: *First*, Whether the
Religion he professes be True
and Divine; and *then*, Whether he has so far
complied with the Rules of this Religion,
as to stand intitled to the Blessings thereof.

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The Christians of our Age and Nation, have been nursed up amongst the Forms of Christianity from their Childhood; they take it for granted their Religion is divine and true, and therefore seldom enter into the *first* Enquiry: But when they come to think in good earnest about religious Affairs, their great Concern is with the *second*, (*viz.*) to know whether they have so far complied with the Rules of the Gospel of *Christ*, as to obtain an Interest in the promis'd Blessings of it. And when they hear such a Text as this, *He that believeth, hath the Witness in himself*; they immediately expect that the Meaning and Design of it should be to *witness* the Truth of their own Faith, and consequently to prove their own Title to Salvation.

But in the first Christian Age the Case was far otherwise. The Gospel it self was not then universally established, and the Disciples of this new Religion might have frequent Doubts in their own Minds concerning the Truth of it, while they saw it disallowed and opposed by the World round about them. 'Twas evidently necessary therefore for them to enquire, Whether it came from God or no? And 'tis with this view that the Apostle *John* writes these words, *He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the Witness in himself*: (*viz.*) he hath a Proof within himself, that *Eternal Life is in the Son*, ver. 11. and is to be obtain'd by

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Serm. I. *to Christianity.*

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our believing in him. 'Tis to the Truth of this Doctrine that the *Three bear Record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and the Three on Earth, the Spirit, the Water, and the Blood.* And though the Proof of the Sincerity and Truth of our own Faith may be derived from hence by a further Consequence, yet the first and direct Design of the Apostle is to show, that the Truth and Divinity of our Religion has an inward Witness to it in the Heart of every Believer.

Here give me leave to put you in Mind, that 'tis necessary for you, as 'twas for the Primitive Christians, to settle your Profession of Christianity upon solid Grounds; otherwise you are *Christians* but for the same reason that makes a *Turk* a Disciple of *Mahomet*, or a *Heathen* a Worshipper of the Gods of his Country; that is, because you were born in such a Climate, and under such a Meridian. And can you be contented with so poor a Pretence to the Noblest Religion? and lay so sandy a Foundation for your eternal Hopes?

Besides, the Day in which we live, threatens you with bold Temptations; and how will you stand if you have no surer Grounds? Infidelity is a growing Weed; the Contempt and Ridicule of Reveal'd Religion flourish and become fashionable among the gay part of the World; and if you are not

furnished with some solid Proofs of the Gospel of *Christ*, you may be in great Danger of losing your Faith; you may be tempted to yield up your Religion to a witty Jest, and become a Heathen for Company.

I might say another Thing to awaken you to acquaint your selves with some Arguments that will justify and support your Belief of the Gospel. Suppose you think you have complied with the Rules of your Religion, and have rais'd your Hopes of Heaven to a high Degree; should *Satan* the Tempter spread his Darknes around your Souls, and in a melancholy and gloomy Hour assault your Faith with such bold Questions as these, *How do you know that Christianity is the true Religion? What Tokens have you to show that it came from God?* If you have no other Answer to make, but that 'Tis the Religion of your Country, that you were born and bred up in it, think with your selves how your Spirits will be surprized, your Comforts languish, and all your high-built Hopes totter to the Ground; unless the Spirit of God, by his uncommon and sovereign Grace should give in an Answer to the Temptation, and by some immediate and convincing Argument support your Faith: But if you are negligent to lay a good Foundation at first, you have no reason to expect such Divine Favour.

Serm. I. *to Christianity.*

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Let the Importance of this Concern therefore keep your Attention awake, while I briefly run over some of the Proofs of Christianity, and thus lead you down to the surest and best of them, which is contained in my Text.

Many are the outward Testimonies that God hath given to the Gospel of his Son; many Witnesses have confirmed it from the time that *Christ* appeared in the Flesh to the Day when St. *John* wrote this Epistle. If we trace his Life from the Cradle in the Manger to his Cross and the Grave, we shall find the Rays of Divinity still shining round his Doctrine and his Works, still pointing to his Person, and proving his Commission with a convincing and resistless Light.

At his Birth the witnessing Angels appear'd in much Brightness, and while the Son of God lay an Infant below, his Record was on high; for there appeared a strange new Star, and was his Witness in Heaven. The wise Men of the *East* were his Witnesses, when they came from afar, and paid Tributes and Offerings, Gold and Incense to the God, the King of *Israel*. *Simeon* and *Anna* in the Temple by the Spirit of Prophecy witnessed to the holy Child *Jesus*. And the Doctors with whom he disputed at twelve Years old, were his Witnesses that he was more than Man. At his Baptism

the Father and the Spirit witnessed to the Son of God ; they told the World that this was *He*, the Messiah : The Father by a Voice from Heaven saying, *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased* ; and the Spirit descending upon him like a Dove. His Life was a Life of Wonders, and each of them witnessed to the Truth of his Commission, and to the Divinity of his Doctrine. Every blind Eye that he opened, saw and witnessed *Jesus*, and declared his Divine Power. Every one of the Dead that he raised were his Witnesses. They came from the Land of Silence to speak his Glory, and to give a loud Testimony to his Mission from Heaven. The Devils themselves, when he drove them out of their Possessions, confessed that he was Christ, *the Holy-one of God* ; but he had no Mind to accept their Witness, and therefore forbid them to speak. Miracles attended him to the Cross and the Grave, and opened the Grave again for him, and made a Passage for him to his Father's Right-hand. Nor did the Witnesses of his Person and of his Doctrine then cease ; for that *Salvation which began to be spoken by Jesus the Lord*, was afterwards published by those that heard him, God himself bearing them witness with Signs and Wonders as in *Heb. ii. 3.*

But all these still were outward Witnesses to convince an unbelieving World. There

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is an inward Witness that my Text speaks of, that belongs to every true Christian: *He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the Witness in himself.* And let us prepare now to examine whether our Religion be true, and whether we are Believers on the Son of God in truth, by searching after this inward Witness; which we shall endeavour to explain, by considering these three Things:

I. What Believing on the Son of God means.

II. What this inward Witness is, that Faith gives to Christianity.

III. What sort of Witness it is, and how it exceeds other Testimonies in several respects. And,

Lastly, We shall make some Inferences.

I. What is meant in my Text by *Believing on the Son of God.*

I answer briefly under these two Heads. It is,

1. A Believing *Jesus Christ* to be the Saviour of the World.

2. A Trust in *Christ Jesus* as our Saviour.

1. It is a *Believing Jesus Christ to be the Saviour of the World*; and in this Manner it is often expressed by our Apostle in these Epistles: A Belief that *Jesus Christ* is the *Messiah*, who was foretold by all the Prophets, and represented by all the Types and Shadows of the Old Testament.

This usually includes a Belief of the most important Things that are related in the Gospel concerning his Person; such as that he is true God and true Man; the Son of God before all Ages, and the Son of Man born in Time. *That he was of the Seed of David after the Flesh, but declared to be the Son of God with Power by his Resurrection from the Dead*; Rom. i. 3. That he is that eternal Word, who in the beginning was with God, and was God, and that was in due Time made *Flesh, and tabernacled among us*; as in 1 John i. 14. This is that *Mystery of Godliness* which we must believe, *God manifest in the Flesh*; 2 Tim. iii. 15.

It implies also our Belief of his Doctrine, as well as of the Divinity and Humanity of his Person; (*viz.*) That we are all Sinners condemned by the Law of God; Enemies to God in our Minds, Transgressors in our Lives, and exposed to eternal Death: That the Divine Law is so strict, so perfect, so holy, and so just, that no meer Man since the Fall can fulfil it, nor yet can excuse or free himself from the Condemnation of it: That Christ himself came to fulfil this Law, as he tells us in Matt. v. 17, 18. That he came not only to perform the Duties of it by an active Obedience, but to put himself under the Curse and Condemnation for our sakes. Which the Apostle to the Galatians expresses in this Language, *that in the fulness*
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of time he was made under the Law to become a Curse for us, that we who are under the Law might be redeemed from the Curse, and receive a Blessing; Gal. iii. 13. & iv. 5. That he died for our Offences, that he rose again for our Justification; and that he has received the Spirit of Holiness, which he sends into our sinful Natures, to form us fit for that Heavenly Inheritance which he hath purchased for us by his Death. That without this Purification of our Natures, we can have no Hope of Heaven, for without Repentance and Holiness no Man shall see God. That Jesus Christ our Lord shall raise the Dead, shall come in the last Day to judge the World, and pass a decisive Sentence, and shall then reward every one according to their Works. Tho' all these Things were not so plainly taught by our Saviour himself in his publick Ministry in the World, yet these were the Doctrines which his Apostles preached continually, and they received them from him by private Instructions, or the Inspiration of his Spirit, so that they are properly called the Doctrines of Christ.

But this is not all that is required of Believers; for so much Knowledge, and so much Faith as this is; the Devils may have, and Simon Magus the Sorcerer might have as much as this when he believed. The Faith that is expressed in this Epistle, and in other Places of Scripture, is more than

a bare Assent to the great Truths of the Gospel; for 'tis such a Faith as *overcomes the World*, such a Faith as *gains a Victory* over Things sensual, and over *Satan*; such a Faith as evidences a Man *to be born of God*: And therefore something more must be implied in it than a mere Belief of the Nature and Person of Christ, and the Truth of his Doctrine.

2. It therefore implies a *betrusting the Soul into the Hands of Christ*, that he may be our Saviour. And I have sometimes thought that those Words in the *Greek*, which we render *Faith* and *Believing*, are continually used in the New Testament, to signify *Faith*, a *saving Faith*; because they not only signify, in their natural Sense, the *believing of a Truth*, but the *trusting in a Person*. They signify believing the Doctrine of Christ, and committing the Soul into his Hands as a Saviour, as 'tis expressed by St. Paul, 2 Tim. i. 12. *I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded he is able to keep what I have committed to him.* To *believe on the Son of God* therefore is when a Person, from a Sense of Sin and Danger of eternal Death, and his Inability to escape any other Way, applies himself unto *Christ Jesus*, as the Son of God, the Saviour of the World. When the Soul commits itself into his Hands, as one All-sufficient in himself to save, and one appointed by the
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Father for this glorious purpose: When the Soul is made willing to be justified by the Merits and Righteousness of another, seeing it self unable, by all its own Works, to attain to a justifying Righteousness. When the Soul is desirous to be sanctified by the Grace that is from above, because it sees the Necessity of Holiness, and yet feels it self utterly incapable to renew its own Nature, to mortify its own Sins, or to form it self fit for the Enjoyment of God and Heaven. When the Soul, for these Ends, puts it self under the Care of *Christ Jesus*, who is authorized and commissioned by the Father to take Care of sinful and guilty Souls, to remove and cancel their Guilt by his Sacrifice, and invest them with a perfect Righteousness, to begin the Work of Grace in them, to fill them with Principles of Holiness, and by degrees to fit them for his Glory; such a Soul is a Believer on the Son of God, and such a Soul has the Witness in himself, that our Religion is Divine, and that Christianity is from above.

II. The Second Thing I proposed to consider, is, *What is this inward Witness that Faith gives to the Truth of Christianity?*

At the first Promulgation of the Gospel, there were some Souls overpowered with present Miracles, attended with a Divine Light.

Light shining into them. This was such as they could not resist, such as carried glorious Evidence with it, and effectually wrought upon them to believe that our Religion was from Heaven, that *Christ* was the Son of God, and that his Name was the only Ground of Hope for Salvation. This was miraculous and extraordinary, and not to be expected every Day now; such was the Conversion of *St. Paul* to Christianity, and many such Instances of Miracle appeared in the first Seasons of the Gospel.

But the Witness that the Apostle *John* speaks of in my Text, is such as belongs to every Believer. 'Tis a universal Proposition, *He that believes, has the Witness in himself.*

In order therefore to enquire the Nature of this Testimony, I shall not lead you, nor my self, into the Land of modern Enthusiasm, that Region of Clouds and Darkness, that pretends to Divine Light. The Apostle does not mean here a strong Impulse, an irrational and ungrounded Assurance that our Religion is true. Many times these vehement Impulses are but the foolish Fires of Fancy, that give the enquiring Traveller no steady Light or Conduct, but lead him far astray from Truth. Christianity has a better Witness than this; being such as belongs to every
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Believer, it must approve it self to the Reason of Men. And I will endeavour to explain it thus according to Scripture.

Let it be first noted here, that the Word *Witness* is used frequently, by our Translators, to signify *Testimony*, or *Evidence*. Nor will it create any Confusion to use these Words promiscuously in this Discourse, while we distinguish them from the *Thing witnessed*, (which, in the Original, is also *μαρτυρία*) and is translated the *Record*, ver. 10, 11.

Now if we enquire what is that *Testimony* to Christianity, or that inward *Witness* that every Believer has in himself, let us consider what that Record is which God has testified concerning his Son *Christ Jesus*. That you will find in the Context, ver. 11, 12. *This is the Record*, or Thing witnessed, *that God hath given to us eternal Life, and this Life is in his Son; he that hath the Son of God hath Life, and he that hath not the Son hath not Life. He then that believes on the Son of God hath the Witness*, or Testimony to Christianity, *in himself*, for he hath within him the *Thing testified*. He hath eternal Life in himself, he hath this eternal Life already begun, and it shall be carried on and fulfilled in the Days of Eternity. By believing in *Christ*, we have a glorious Testimony, or Witness, within our selves, that *Christ* is the Son of God, the Saviour of the World,

World, and the Author of eternal Life; that his Person is Divine, that his Doctrine is True, for eternal Life is begun in us.

We shall make this more fully appear, by considering what is *Eternal Life*, and showing how far it is found in every Believer, and how it becomes a Witness of Christianity in his Heart.

Eternal Life consists in *Happiness* and *Holiness*, 'tis made up of these two, and there is such a necessary Connection between them, that they run into one another; but, for Order-sake, I shall distinguish them thus.

The *Happiness* of eternal Life consists in the Pardon of Sin, in the special Favour of God, and in the Pleasure that arises from the regular Operation of all our Powers and Passions. Now these three Things are, in some Measure, found with every Soul that believes in *Christ*.

The *Happiness* of eternal Life consists,

1. *In the Pardon of Sin*; thence arises *Peace of Conscience*. This is a Part of Heaven; the Perfection of this Peace belongs to the Heavenly State. Our Pardon is compleat on Earth, but the Sense of this Pardon is not compleat and free from all Doubts, or at least from all Danger of doubting, till we arrive at full Glory.

When

When a Soul is made sensible that all its Iniquities are for ever cancelled, that God will never avenge any of his Crimes upon him, when he knows that this God, who has a Right to punish with everlasting Re- venges, is at Peace, and will demand no more Satisfaction for his Sins; this Soul then has the Beginning of Heaven. This is a Part of final Blessedness, and of compleat eternal Life.

Now this is, in some Measure, found in Believers here: They that have trusted in the Son of God, begin to find Peace in their own Consciences, they can hope God is reconciled to them through the Blood of *Christ*, that their Iniquities are atoned for, and that Peace is made betwixt God and them. This belongs only to the Doctrine of *Christ*, and witnesses it to be Divine: for there is no Religion that ever pretended to lay such a Foundation of Pardon and Peace, as the Religion of the Son of God does; for he has made himself a Propitiation; *Jesus* the Righteous is become our Reconciler, by becoming a Sacrifice: *Rom. iii. 25, 26. Him hath God set forth for a Propitiation through Faith, in his Blood, to declare his Righteousness for the Remission of Sins that are past, that he might be just, and the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus: Therefore being justified by Faith, we have Peace with God. Rom. v. 1. Behold the Lamb of God,*

God, that takes away the Sins of the World! was the Language of *John*, who was but the Fore-runner of our Religion, and took a Prospect of it at a little Distance: and much more of the particular Glories and Blessings of this Atonement is displayed by the blessed Apostles, the Followers of the Lamb.

Other Religions, that have been drawn from the Remains of the Light of Nature, or that have been invented by the superstitious Fears and Fancies of Men, and obtruded on Mankind by the Craft of their Fellow-Creatures, are all at a Loss in this Instance, and can never speak Peace and Pardon.

(1.) The Religion of the *Heathens*, and the best of Philosophers, could never assure us, *whether God would pardon Sin at all, or no.* The Light of Nature indeed would dictate thus much, that God is, in his own Nature, gracious, and compassionate, and kind; but whether God would be gracious to you or me, compassionate to such ill-deserving Sinners as we are, the Light of Nature could never determine. 'Tis only the Son of God, that came down from the Bosom of the Father, could so well inform us how the Father's Heart worked towards such Sinners, in the Designs of Pardon and Reconciliation.

(2.) Again, the Light of Nature could never tell us *how often God would pardon Sinners.* Suppose it could be found out by Reason

Reason

Reason that God is so compassionate, that he would forgive Offences, yet it could never be inferred how often we could be forgiven; and if he had pardoned us once, we might for ever despair if we had committed new Iniquities: for who but a Divine Messenger can tell us, that he will often repeat his Pardons?

(3.) The Light of Nature could never inform us *how great the Offences were that could be forgiven*; Reason could never tell us, that Rebellions of the biggest Size, and Treasons of the blackest Aggravation, should be all cancell'd; the Light of Nature could never say, *All manner of Sin and Blasphemy shall be forgiven to Men.* This the Son of God only hath taught us, who came from the Bosom of the Father, and who laid a Foundation for the brightest Displays of pardoning Grace.

(4.) Reason, with all the Principles of Natural Religion, could never teach us *what we must do to obtain Pardon*, and on what Terms God would forgive. Reason indeed might require us to repent of Sin, but it could never assure us, that *he that confesseth, and forsaketh his Sins, shall find Mercy.* Nor could it shew us any Mediator or Reconciler between God and Man, nor how, or in what manner, we must address our selves to him, or to an offended God by him; Reason could never start a Thought of this
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strange way of Salvation, that we must believe, or trust in another's Sufferings, in order to the Pardon of our own Sins; that we must depend on the Merits and Righteousness of one that died, in order to obtain Forgiveness and Life; that *by Faith, in the Blood of Christ, God will justify them that believe in Jesus.* What could the Light of mere Nature teach us concerning this *Jesus?* and yet *there is no other Name under Heaven whereby we can be saved,* Acts iv. 12.

(5.) The Light of Nature, or any Religion invented by Men, could never acquaint us with the Foundations of Divine Forgiveness, nor shew us any Merit sufficient to procure it, and in this Sense we are left at a loss in all other Religions, upon what Ground we could expect Pardon from God: For they knew nothing of an Atonement equal to our Guilt, nothing of a Satisfaction great as our Offences, and that could answer the high Demands of infinite and offended Justice. Mankind found out by Reason, and by the Sting and Disquietudes of a guilty Conscience, that there was an offended God in Heaven, and in several Countries they followed the Dictates of a wild and uneasy Imagination, inventing an endless variety of Methods to appease the angry Deity. What Multitudes of Rams, and Goats, and thousands of larger Cattle, were cut to pieces, and burnt, to atone for the Sins of Men.

What Deluges of Blood have overflowed their Altars? What fanciful Sprinklings and vast Effusions of Wine and Oil? The first-born Son for the Transgression of the Father, and the Fruit of the Body for the Sin of the Soul? What cruel Practices on their own Flesh? What Cuttings and Burnings to procure Pardon? And yet, after all, no true Peace, nor reasonable Hope.

The *Jewish* Religion indeed was invented by God himself, and it contained in it the way of obtaining Pardon, but 'twas veiled and darkened by many Types and Shadows; tho' it was not defective as to real Pardon, yet it was very defective as to solid Peace: Therefore the Apostle tells us, *Heb. x. 1, 2, &c. The Law having a Shadow of good Things to come, and not the very Image of the Things, can never, with those Sacrifices which they offered Year by Year, continually make the Comers thereunto perfect, &c.* The Sense of which, compared with the following Verses, is plainly this, *Those Sacrifices, that were so often repeated, could never perfectly take away the Conscience of Guilt:* there still remained some trembling Fears, some uneasy Doubts, some painful Concern of Mind, whether their Iniquities should be entirely cancelled or no: because they were convinced that the Blood of Bulls and Goats could not do it, and they could not fully and plainly see the Blood of Jesus, the

the Son of God, the Saviour. Dark Hints, and obscure Notices, of such a *Messiah*, and such a Sacrifice, they had; but such a one as could not generally free their Consciences from all Sense of Defilement, and Guilt, and Fears, tho' it cleansed their Souls in the sight of God.

The *Socinians*, in our Age, can have but very little solid Comfort, if they are truly awaken'd to a spiritual fight of the Law of God; for when they have nothing to plead with God, and nothing to trust in but his meer absolute Mercy, while they deny the proper Satisfaction of *Christ Jesus*, how weak must their Hope be, how feeble is the Foundation of it! But when a poor, convinced, awaken'd Soul, that now believes the Doctrine of *Christ*, has been long before tormented in his Conscience about Atonement for Sin, and found no Hope; the Christian Religion, the Gospel, with its pardoning Grace, and the Satisfaction that *Christ* has made, gives the Soul Peace, and leads the troubled Conscience to Rest and Quiet; he trusts this Gospel, he receives this Salvation, and hath the Witness in himself that it is Divine.

2. The Happiness of Eternal Life consists also in the *special Favour of God*, which is distinct from the *Pardon of Sin*; for 'tis very possible for a Criminal to be pardoned, and not to be made a Favourite of the King.

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The Favour of God, and a Sense of this Favour, is a great part of Heaven. This is called *Seeing of God*, often in Scripture. When Souls are fully possessed of the Love of God, when they have it shed abroad in their Hearts in Perfection, when they know that the Infinite and Eternal Maker and Governour of all Things loves them, and will for ever love them, this is Eternal Life; and this is enjoy'd in some measure here on Earth by true Believers, this is a part of Eternal Life begun in the Heart of every Christian: for whom God pardons, he receives into his peculiar Favour.

This the Christian Religion teaches us, but the Light of Nature could never tell us so: for if the Light of Nature and Reason could have proceeded so far as to acquaint us with pardoning Grace in all the extent of it, yet it could never have presumed to assure us, *That he should make the Rebels he had pardoned his Favourites for ever.* We might have been forgiven, and then annihilated. But the Scripture teaches us, whom God forgives he makes Favourites too. And *Christ Jesus* has laid the Foundation of this double Blessing; for he has not only made an *end of Sin*, but *brought in an everlasting Righteousness*; Dan. ix. 24. He has fulfilled the Law in all the Commands of it, as well as borne the Penalty; he has purchased all the Blessings of Divine Love,
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as well as bought a Freedom from Divine Vengeance. *If when we were Enemies, we were reconciled to God by the Death of his Son; much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his Life, Rom. v. 10. And in ver. 1, & 2. he saith, Being justified by Faith, we have Peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoice in the Hope of the Glory of God.* Thus you see there is not only Reconciliation, but full Salvation, not only Peace with God, but the Hope of Glory to be obtain'd by believing on the Son of God. Many are the Instances of Saints here dwelling in Flesh in a Day of Grace, that have been raised to a good Degree of Eternal Life in this respect, that have had a joyful Sense of the Love of God shed abroad in their Souls, and upon solid Grounds have hoped for Glory, such as no other Religion could pretend to furnish them with; and this is a Witness to the Truth of Christianity.

No meer human Religion can pretend to tell how this special Love of God may be attained, no human Religion can ever tell us how long this Love of God shall continue; but the Word of God gives us full Evidence and Assurance that the worst of Sinners, who apply themselves to Jesus Christ the Saviour, in the Way of humble Faith and hearty Repentance, shall not only be forgiven and releas'd from the Guilt of Sin and Punishment, but also shall be

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beloved of God for the sake of *Christ*, and that this Divine Love is everlasting. Read Acts iii. 19. *Repent and be converted, that your Sins may be blotted out.* Acts xvi. 31. *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.* And when Persons are interested in these Promises, who shall lay any Thing to their charge? Who shall condemn when God justifies? Who shall separate them from the Love of *Christ*? Shall Tribulation or Distress, Famine or Sword? No, by no means; for in all these Things we are more than Conquerors through him that has loved us; and we are persuaded, that neither Death, nor Life, nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers, nor Things present, nor Things to come, nor Height, nor Depth, nor any other Creature, shall be able to separate us from the Love of God which is in *Christ Jesus our Lord*, Rom. viii. 33, &c.

When a rational Mind is awaken'd to see the Emptiness of all Creatures, and their Insufficiency to make him happy, and finds nothing but the Eternal Love of God capable to make a Creature truly Blessed; how miserably must that Soul be tormented, that knows not whether God will love him or no, nor how this Love may be attained; nor, when once attained, how long this Love will continue? But he finds an Answer to all these painful Questions in the Gospel of *Christ*: for the Father loves the Son infinitely, and loves all those that be-
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lieve on him for his sake; they are for ever accepted in him who is first and for ever accepted, and they are beloved in him who is first and for ever beloved; *Eph. i. 6.*

3. The Happiness of eternal Life consists in *the Pleasure that arises from the regular Operation of all our Powers and Passions.* This was a great Part of the Happiness of the innocent Man; his Reason was the Guide to all his meaner Faculties, and his Appetites and his Affections in a sweet Harmony followed the Conduct of his Reason: and as his Understanding and Judgment put forth their regular Dictates, so the meaner Powers paid a constant Obedience, and pursued their proper Objects. There was no irregular Anger to set his Blood on fire, no intemperate and corrupt Wishes to vitiate his Nature, to pollute his Pleasures, and disturb his Peace; none of those Tumults and Hurricanes in his Soul, which we so often feel in our fallen State, and lament them much oftner than we can suppress them. And as the Fancies and Appetites of innocent *Adam* submitted to his Reason, so, doubtless, if his Maker were pleased to reveal any sublime Truth to him, which his Reason could not comprehend, then Reason itself submitted to that Revelation, believed the Word of speaking God, and resign'd the Throne of Faith. His Natural Powers had no uneasiness

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Contest, there was no Civil War nor Rebellion amongst them to interrupt his Happiness.

And thus shall it be again, but in a more glorious Manner, when we are rais'd from all the Ruins of our fallen State, and Eternal Life is made compleat in Heaven.

But before we arrive at that final Glory, the same sort of Happiness is begun in every Believer in a State of Grace. These are the Buildings of Eternal Life, the Earnests and the Pledges of the perfect Blessedness which we hope for; and this arises from our Faith in the Son of God. For when we have attained a good Hope of forgiving Grace through the Blood of *Christ*, and believe that we are beloved of God our Maker, what have we then to do but to abide in his Love? We learn to despise those tempting Objects that would awaken our intemperate Passions, and walk onward in Peace and Pleasure towards our compleat Felicity. For since God is become our God through the Mediation of his Son, we have no Need to seek the meaner Delights of Sense and Appetite, because we possess the supreme. We have the Son of God himself for our Leader and Example, and he that believes on the Son of God, walks as he also walked.

Besides these moral or persuasive Helps that belong to the Christian Life, we have
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also the *Spirit of God* given to reform our Natures, to put all our misplaced and disjointed Powers into their proper Order again, and to maintain this divine Harmony and Peace. 'Tis the blessed Spirit that inclines Reason to submit to Faith, and makes the lower Faculties submit to Reason, and obey the Will of our Maker, and then gives us the Pleasure of it. And if at any Time through the Power of Temptation, the Violence of Appetite, and the Imperfection of Grace, this blessed Harmony and Order is disturbed, and this Pleasure interrupted, the Soul of the Christian is never easy till it rise again by Repentance, and recur to the Son of God, to fetch new and vigorous Supplies of the *Spirit*, and of this Eternal Life from him, and thereby it regains its Peace and Pleasure.

But these Thoughts naturally lead me to the second Part of this Subject, (*viz.*) *Peace of Conscience*.

Thus much shall suffice therefore concerning the first Part of Eternal Life, which consists in *Happiness*, (*viz.*) Pardon of Sin, Peace of Conscience, the Favour of God, the Security of his Love, and the pleasurable Harmony of our Natural Powers. These are found only in true Believers, and this is a noble Witness to Christianity to prove it Divine.



S E R M O N II.

The Inward Witness to Christianity.

I Ep. JOHN V. 10.

*He that believeth on the Son of God,
bath the Witness in himself.*

The Second Part.



WHEN such a Text as this is named for the Foundation of Discourse, some nicer Hearers begin to grow jealous that the Preacher is entering into *Mystery* and *inward Light*, and they

expect to hear no clear and solid *Reasoning*, nor any *Justness* of *Thought*. Thus blinded by their own Prejudices, they prevent their Improvement by the Ministry of the Word; and because they have heard the Experiences of *Christians* wittily ridiculed, they resolve to believe that nothing of Experimental Religion can be justified to strict Reason, or have any Thing to do with Argument.

But how impious, and how unreasonable a Fancy this is, will sufficiently appear, if it can be proved that every true Christian has a most rational and uncontestable Evidence of the Truth of his Religion, drawn from the Change that is hereby made in his own Heart. If it can once be made evident that Eternal Life is begun in every Soul that believes in *Jesus Christ*, this will confirm Christianity with a high Hand, and confute the wicked Scandal for ever.

I have begun this Attempt in the *first* Discourse, and have shown that *Eternal Life* is composed of two Parts, (*viz.*) *Holiness* and *Happiness*.

The *Happiness* of it consists in a just and comfortable Sense of the Forgiveness of Sin, and a lively Hope and Persuasion of the special Love of God, and the delightful Harmony of the Natural Powers, (*viz.*) Reason, Conscience, the Will, and the Passions. Where these are found, Heaven is begun; Eternal Life is taken Possession of the Soul; and this evidently proves the Doctrine that effected it to be Divine.

Now, if an *Atheist*, a *Heathen*, or a *Jew* should cavil and say, "Are not all your Hopes meer Presumption? Are not your Sense and Persuasion of the Love of God mere Delusions of Fancy, and Raptures of a warm Imagination, without any Ground or solid Foundation of Reason?"

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Christian may boldly refute such Suspensions. These are no vain Transports, no foolish Visions of Hope and Joy, because as high and glorious as my Comforts and my Expectations are, they are built on a due Apprehension of the Justice of God, as well as his Mercy; I have no Hopes of Pardon by *Jesus Christ*, but what are supported by the Righteousness and Truth of God, as well as his Goodness; for in this Way of Salvation, offended Justice is satisfy'd to the full, and Mercy can exert it self in full Glory, without the least Dishonour or Reflection on the strict Righteousness of God. *God is just in the Justification* of a Sinner this Way, *he is faithful and just to forgive us our Sins, and to cleanse us from all Unrighteousness*; 1 John i. 9.

Besides, says the *Christian*, the Change wrought in me is real, and not imaginary; I am quite another Creature than once I was; the several Powers of my Nature, that were wont to be in perpetual War, now enjoy a peaceful Harmony, and my Soul feels the Pleasure and the Divine Peace. My strictest and severest Reason approves the Change, and owns it to be Divine.

And thus I am led onward to speak of the other Part of *Eternal Life*, and that is *Holiness*. This also is found in believing Souls,

Souls, and becomes an Evidence of the Truth of the Gospel.

Holiness may be described by these five necessary Ingredients of it.

1. An Aversion to, and Hatred of all Sin.
2. A Contempt of the present World, in comparison of the future.
3. A Delight in the Worship and Society of God.
4. Zeal and Activity in his Service.
5. A hearty Love to Fellow-Creatures and more especially to Fellow-Saints.

I shall discourse of each of these particularly, and show that Eternal Life consists in them, and this Eternal Life is found in Believers.

1. *Holiness* consists in *an Aversion to, and Hatred of all Sin*. This is compleat in Heaven, and without this, Heaven cannot be compleat. Into Heaven *there enters nothing that defiles*, Rev. xxi. 27. Every Inhabitant there is compleatly averse to all Iniquity and hates every Thing that displeases God; for nothing but perfect Obedience is found there; the *Spirits of the Just* are there *made perfect*, Heb. xii. 23. Now this in Measure and Degree is found in Believers here, for *he that abideth in Christ, sinneth not* 1 John iii. 6. He cannot sin with a full Purpose of Heart; he that is born of God cannot sin with Constancy and Greediness as others do that are only born of Flesh and Blood.

Blood ; he cannot sin without an inward sincere Reluctancy, without the Combat of the Spirit against the Flesh ; he doth not make a Trade of Sin, sinning is not his Business, his Delight, and Pleasure. This is a blessed Testimony of the Truth of the Gospel, *Acts* xv. 9. That Faith in the Son of God *purifies the Heart*.

Every Christian has an Aversion to all Sin : If he chuses some Sins, to continue in them, and hates other Iniquities, he can never be said to be a true Believer in *Christ*, and to have the Work of Faith in Sincerity wrought in his Heart.

Other Religions have professed an Aversion to some Sins, but indulged others. Some make Cruelty a Part of their Duty, and require the sacrificing of Mankind to appease the Anger of their Gods ; a bloody and impious Practice, as well as a vain and fruitless one ! Some forbid Murder, but allow and encourage variety of Uncleanneſs, and make that a Part of their Worship. Other Professions have forbid wanton Practices, and commended Chastity ; but they indulge Resentment and Revenge, as a necessary Part of the Character of a Warrior, or a great Man. Carnal and sensual Lusts have been opposed and hated by some of the old Philosophers, but spiritual Iniquities have hereby been promoted. Pride has hereby been wonderfully increased,

sed, and none of them can excuse themselves from those Sins which make Men very like *Satan*, altho' they are freed from the Brutality of sensual Lusts. But the Business of the Gospel of *Christ* is to keep Men from committing any kind of Sins whatsoever.

Other Religions have changed one Lust for another ; but the Religion of *Christ* forbids all Manner of Iniquity, and changes the whole Nature into Holiness. Christianity refines the Soul in all the Powers of it, and inclines us to the Duties both of the first and second Table ; it writes the Law of God in the Heart, and brings the Soul to a sweet Compliance therewith. All the Affections are renewed, all *old Things are done away, and all Things are become new ; he that is in Christ is a new Creature ; he has crucified the Flesh with its Affections and Lusts ;* 2 Cor. v. 17. Gal. v. 24.

Surely there is a Spirit and Power that accompanies the Religion of our Lord *Jesus*, such as other Religions know not ; and this was manifest abundantly in the primitive Christians, when those Wretches were converted, whose Names were once written in that black Catalogue that the Apostle speaks of, 1 *Corinth.* vi. 9. when they, by the Light of the Gospel, were purified, were purged from their Defilements, and were made new Creatures. The Apostle could appeal to the *Corinthian Church*, and say,

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say, so vile and filthy were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are justified, but ye are sanctified in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God: Not in the Names of other Gods, and other Religions, but in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Philosophy was raised to a great Height in the City of Corinth; it was almost enough for a Man to be accounted learned, to have been in that City, and to have known a little of the Customs of it: yet all their Learning was not sufficient to reform them, for they were a profligate and lewd People still. But the Religion of our Lord Jesus Christ, breaking in upon their Souls, purified, refined them, and made such an Alteration in them, that the World beheld, and were amazed at the surprizing Change. They thought it strange that the Christians would not run with them to the same Excess of Riot: They were astonished to see a Drunkard at once turn sober and temperate; a lewd unclean Wretch, by hearing the Gospel, become a Professor and an Example of Chastity; a cruel and passionate Temper made calm, and kind, and forgiving; a Swine forsake the Mire, and put on the Nature of a cleanly Animal; a Dog or a Lion changed into a Lamb. This wrought Conviction with Power; this was Miracle and Demonstration; this witnessed the Truth and Divinity of the Gospel of

Christ beyond all Contradiction or Doubt.

2. *A Holy Contempt of this World*, is another part of Heaven; a Disregard of temporal Things raised by the Sight of Things eternal.

If we look upwards to Heaven, we shall behold there all the Inhabitants looking down with a sacred Contempt upon the Trifles, Amusements, Businesses and Cares of this present Life, that engross our Affections, awaken our Desires, fill our Hearts with Pleasure or Pain, and our Flesh with constant Labour. With what holy Scorn do you think those Souls, who are dismissed from Flesh, look down upon the Hurries and Bustles of this present State, in which we are engaged? They dwell in the full Sight of those Glories which they hoped for here on Earth, and their intimate Acquaintance with the Pleasures of that upper World, and the Divine Sensations that are raised in them there, make them condemn all the Pleasures of this State, and every Thing below Heaven. This is a Part of eternal Life, this belongs in some Degree to every Believer; for he is not a Believer that is not got above this World in a good Measure; he is not a Christian, who is not weaned, in some Degree, from this World: *For this is our Victory whereby we overcome the World, even our Faith*; 1 John v. 4. *He that is born of God overcomes the World; he that believes in Je-*
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Jesus, is born of God: Whence the Argument is plain, he that believes in Jesus, the Son of God, overcomes this present World. And where Christianity is raised to a good Degree of Life and Power in the Soul, there we see the Christian got near to Heaven: he is, as it were, a Fellow for Angels, a fit Companion for the *Spirits of the Just made perfect*. The Affairs of this Life are beneath his best Desires and his Hopes; he engages his Hand in them so far, as God his Father appoints his Duty; but he longs for the upper World, where his Hopes are gone before: "When shall I be entirely dismissed from this Labour and Toil? The gaudy Pleasures this World entertains me with, are no Entertainments to me; I am weaned from them, I am born from above." This is the Language of that Faith that overcomes the World: And Faith, where it is wrought in Truth in the Soul, hath, in some Measure, this Effect; and where it shines in its Brightness, it hath, in a great Degree, *this sublime Grace* accompanying it; or rather, (shall I say?) *this Piece of Heavenly Glory*.

Pain and Sicknefs, Poverty and Reproach, Sorrow and Death itself have been contemn'd by those that have believed in *Christ Jesus*, with much more Honour to Christianity than ever was brought to other Religions by the same Profession, and the same Practice:

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Other Religions have, in some Degree, promised a Contempt of the World, a Contempt of Sickneſs, and Pain, and Death ; but then it hath been only here and there a Perſon of a hardier Mould of Body ; here and there one in an Age, or one in a Nation, who, by a Firmneſs of natural Spirits, an obſtinate Reſolution, attained by much Labour of Meditation, and Toil of Thought, hath got above the World, and above Death. But our Religion boatts of its Hundreds and Thouſands, and that not only thoſe who had firmer natural Spirits, or have been ſkilled in Thought and Meditation, and abſent from ſenſual Things by Philoſophy, and intellectual Exerciſes ; but the feebleſt of Mankind, the weak Things of this World, the Fooliſh and the Young, the Infant (as it were) in Years, and the Feeble Sex, have been made to contemn this World, and the Pleaſures of it, the Hopes, and the Sorrows, Pain, and Death. They have learnt to live above all the enticing Joys and affrighting Terrors of this preſent State, that is, to live near to Heaven : So that whatſoever Religion pretends to a Competition with ours, it falls vaſtly ſhort in this Reſpect, in raiſing the Affections above the World, above the Joys and Fears of the preſent Life.

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tempt of the World, we shall find the Religion of *Christ Jesus* is far superior to all in this Respect.

Other Religions have taught Men to despise the *Good Things* of this World, and to be unconcerned about the *Evils* of it, in a meer Romantick Way : Such was the *Stoical Doctrine*, denying Health and Wealth, Sleep and Safety, to have any *Goodness* in them ; and professing that Pain, Poverty, Sickneſs, Want, Hunger, and Shame, were no *Evils* ; and upon this Account they taught their Disciples to be unſollicitous about the one or the other, becauſe they were neither good nor evil. Thus, while they change the Use of Words, they would make Stocks and Stones of us, rather than intelligent and holy Deſpiſers of ſenſible Things ; but the *Chriſtian Doctrine* teaches us to conſemn both the good and evil Things of Senſe and Time, by the Expectation and Proſpect of the inviſible and eternal World, where both the good and evil Things are of infinitely greater Importance : So our Saviour preaches, *Mat. vi. 19, 20. Lay not up for your ſelves Treasures upon Earth, where Moth and Ruſt does corrupt, and where Thieves break through and ſteal ; but lay up for your ſelves Treasures in Heaven, where neither Moth nor Ruſt doth corrupt, and where Thieves do not break through nor ſteal. Pluck out a right Eye, cut off a right*

right Hand on Earth, left, sparing these, thy whole Body be cast into Hell, where the gnawing Worm dies not, and the Fire is not quenched; Mat. v. 29, 30. Mark ix. 43, &c. And the Afflictions, as well as the Comforts of Life, are contemned and surmounted by the Spirit of a Christian, upon the same noble Principles, Rom. viii. 18. He reckons that the Sufferings of this present Time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory which shall be revealed in us; and therefore he endures the Cross, and despises the Shame, following the divine Example of *Christ*.

Other Doctrines have endeavoured to raise the Minds of Men above the Sollicitudes or Cares of this Life upon mean and base Principles, unworthy of human Nature, denying the Immortality of the Soul, and the Life to come. Thus the *Epicureans* would raise the Professors of their Religion above the Fears of Death, by assuring them, that after Death there was nothing; that the Soul and Body died together, were blended in the Dust, and were for ever lost in one Grave: But, on the other hand, the Religion of *Christ* gives us a View of Things beyond the Grave, insures a Resurrection to us, brings Life and Immortality to Light by the Gospel, by *Christ Jesus*, who, together with the Father, is originally possessed of eternal Life, and thus leads us on to a glorious

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Contempt of this present World of Vanity :
For our light Affliction, which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory : While we look not at the Things which are seen, but at the Things which are not seen ; for the Things which are seen, are temporal ; but the Things which are not seen, are eternal. For, we know, that if our earthly House of this Tabernacle were dissolved, we have a Building of God, an House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens ; 2 Cor. iv. ult. & v. 1.

Other Professions taught their Followers not so much to condemn Riches and Pleasures, as to exchange them for Fame, and Glory, and publick Applause ; and this they lived upon as their chief Good. Most of the Philosophers may be charged with this just Accusation, and Cicero, that great Philosopher, in a notorious Degree ; but the Christian both labours and suffers Reproach, because he trusts in the living God, and has the Promise of the Life to come ; 1 Tim. iv. 8, 10. he goes through the Tryal of cruel Mockings, as well as Scourgings and Torture, that he may obtain a better Resurrection ; Heb. xi. 35, 36. He neglects his Ease and his Honours together, and despises Fame as well as Pleasure and Riches, and all mortal Desirables, when they stand in Competition with his immortal Hopes.

Others have despised the Grandure and Pomp of Life, and thrown their Money into the Sea ; but instead of exalting themselves

selves above Men, they have neglected all the necessary Duties and Decencies of Life ; they have lived, as it were, in common with their Fellow-Animals of the Earth, and degraded themselves to the Rank and Level of brute Beasts ; such were the *Cynick* Philosophers. But the Christian is diligent and active in all Services to God and Man, and fulfils the Duties of his present State with Honour, while he lives upon the Hope of Futures and Invisibles.

Thus if we consider either the Degree of this Part of *Holiness*, (*viz.*) the Contempt of the World, if we consider the Reasons upon which it is founded, or how far this Contempt of the World has prevailed among the Generality of Christians ; we shall find the Gospel hath infinitely the Advantage of all other Doctrines, of all other Religions.

To see a Man raised above this World, and yet exercised in all the Duties of Life ; to see him live with a holy Superiority to all Things below Heaven, and yet fulfilling all his relative Duties among Men with Diligence, to see a Man ready every Moment to be gone from this World, and yet content to stay here as long as his heavenly Father pleases, under the Troubles, and Burdens, and Agonies of this Life too ; this shows the Religion to be Divine, and from Heaven : *He that believes has this Witness in himself* ; and where Faith rises high, this Witness appears evident and glorious.

3. Another Part of the Holiness of eternal Life, consists in a *Delight in the Worship and Enjoyment of God*. This is perfect in Heaven, this is eternal Life: *Rev. vii. 5. They are before the Throne of God Night and Day, that is perpetually, and serve him there in his Temple*. Now the Christian Religion attains this end in a good Measure; it brings the Soul to delight in Divine Worship and Converse with God, which no meer human Religion could ever do: For since no human Religion could ever teach an awakened Sinner how he might appear in the Presence of a Holy God, with Assurance and Comfort, no other Religion could make a Soul delight in the Worship of God. We can never delight in drawing near to God, that hath infinite Vengeance in him, while we know not but he will pour that Vengeance out upon us; we fly far from him, unless we have some good ground of Hope, that he will forgive us our Iniquities, and receive us into his Favour. Now since there is no other Doctrine, that shews us how our Sins may be forgiven, or how the Favour of God may be attained; there is no other Religion can allure or draw us into the Presence of God with Pleasure: *Heb. x. 19, 20. Let us draw near, and worship the Father, in full Assurance and Confidence, that he will accept our Persons and our Worship, since we have such an High-Priest to introduce us with*
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Acceptance; since, by his Flesh and Incarnation, he has made a Way for us to come into the Presence of God with Satisfaction and Pleasure, therefore let us draw near and worship him. The Influence of this Argument has been found by Christians, by every Christian; for there is not one that hath believed in *Christ*, but has had this Witness in himself. There is a sweet Serenity and Calmness of Spirit belongs to the Souls of those in whom Faith is lively and strong, even when they stand before God, tho' he be a God of Terror and Vengeance to Sinners; for they know *Jesus* is their Atonement, their Introducer, their Peace; and therefore they love to draw near him as a God reconciled, they rejoice in him as their highest Happiness.

Other Professions of Men, when they abandoned sensual Pleasures, and the Vanities of this World, yet taught them that their Happiness must flow from themselves, and made their own Vertues their Heaven without any regard to God. These Philosophers were self-sufficient, full of themselves, and they were so far from making their Rivers of Pleasure to flow from the Right Hand of God, that they even denied their Dependence on him in this respect; and they supposed their *Wise-men* to be equal with God, deriving all their Blessedness from within themselves. But Christianity leads the Soul out of it self to God, as it gives a clearer and

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larger Knowledge of God himself, in his felicitating Perfections, than the Heathens could ever attain; it assures us, that *being near to God is our Heaven*, and the *Sight of him is our Happiness*, as well as provides a *new and living Way of Access to him*, thro' the Death and Resurrection of *Jesus Christ*: therefore the Believer rejoices in all Opportunities of drawing near to God, for 'tis the beginning of his Heaven, and his Delight in it is an inward and powerful Witness to the Truth of his Religion.

4. *Zeal and Activity for the Service of God*, is another Part of Heaven, another Part of eternal Life, and the Holiness of it. We have abundant Reason to believe that Heaven is not a State of meer Enjoyment, unactive and idle; but a State of Service and Activity for that God whose we are, and from whom we have received infinite Favours. The Angels in Heaven are swift Messengers to perform the Will of their God, *Psal. ciii. 20, 21.* The *Spirits of Just Men made perfect are like Angels*. They do the Will of God as a Pattern for us on Earth; for we are taught to pray *that his Will may be done on Earth as it is in Heaven*. What particular Services they are employed in of God, we know not; but that they are for ever zealous in those Services which God employs them in, we doubt not, we cannot disbelieve. And this active Zeal in the Service

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vice of God, and Pursuit of his Glory, is the very Temper and Practice of the true Christian; and that not only in some more important Enterprizes, but in the common Actions of Life: *Whether he eat or drink, or whatsoever he does, he makes it his Rule of Life to do all to the Glory of God*; 1 Cor. x. 31.

Now this sublime Zeal, this noble Activity for the Service of God and his Glory, was not found among the Professors of other Religions. To glorify God, was not their Aim and End: those that rose highest among the old Philosophers, had not set their Aim and End right; *They that knew God, glorified him not as God*; Rom. i. 21. They did not make the Glory of God the great Design of their Actions: it was not Zeal for God that animated them to pursue Virtue, but merely their own Ends, their own Satisfaction or Ease, or the Vanity of their own Minds, Pride and Attempt of Superiority above other Men; or, at best, their Motives of Action were the Reasonableness of Vertue, and the Benefit of it to themselves and their Fellow-Citizens. But the Glory of God is the Aim of Christians, and the End of every true Believer: he has some degree of Zeal for the Honour of God, and therefore is active in those Duties which God proposes to him.

When we see a Person regardless of all his Self-Interests in the World, and at the same

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same time pursuing the Honour of an invincible God, following hard after the Glory of that God that his fleshly Eyes have not seen ; we may say he has something above what meer corrupt Nature leads him to, or impresses upon him. The Believer has this Witness in himself, Zeal and Activity for the Glory of God in the World.

The *Last* Thing that goes to make up Holiness, is a hearty *Love to all Men, and especially to the Saints.* This is a noble Ingredient of Eternal Life ; this is a Divine and Heavenly Temper ; this is a beautiful Part of the Image of God communicated to the Soul of Man. That God who is the Original and Foundation of Eternal Life, is a glorious Pattern of this Love ; he *makes his Sun to rise, and his Rain to fall on the Just and the Unjust, and leaves not himself without Witness* of his Divinity, by *filling the Hearts of Men with Food and Gladness* : see *Matth. v. 45. Acts xiv. 17.* He shows his Love to Enemies and Rebels, in forgiving Millions of Offences, and pardoning Crimes of the largest Size and deepest Aggravations, and he loves his Saints with peculiar Tendernefs. Our Lord *Jesus Christ*, who is also the *true God and Eternal Life*, came down from Heaven to exemplify this Divine Love. 'Twas his Love to Mankind that persuaded him to put on Flesh and Blood, and prevailed with him to suffer
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Pains, Agonies and Death, that his Enemies might obtain Salvation and Life. O glorious Example of Love! Now this is in some Measure wrought into the Make of every true Christian, and imitated in the Practice of every Believer: he is obliged by one of the chief Rules of his Religion to *love his Neighbour as himself*; that is, to do that to others, which he thinks just and reasonable that they should do to him, Mat. xxii. 39. Luke vi. 31. He is bound to forgive freely those that offend him, as he hopes for Forgiveness of his Offences against God. Matt. vi. 14, 15. He rejoices in the Welfare of his Fellow-Creatures, without repining: *He loves his Enemies, does good to them that hate him, blesses those that curse him, and prays for his Persecutors and spiteful Foes*; Luke vi. 27. He pities all that are miserable, but takes a peculiar Delight in his Fellow-Christians; (the Christians may be known by this, that they love one another.) He does good to all, but especially to the *Household of Faith*, Gal. vi. 10.

Other Religions know nothing of so generous and diffusive a Love; the Men of Heathenism were *hateful, and hating one another*, and spent their Life in Malice and Envy, Tit. iii. 3. They did not so much as aspire to so divine a Vertue as the Love of Enemies; this is the noble Singularity of our Gospel. The Heathen Professions encourage

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couraged Revenge, and made it one Ingredient of a Hero: But Envy and Malice, Wrath and Revenge, must be banished from the Heart and Practice of a Christian, to whom the *Kindness and Love of God our Saviour has appeared*; these Vices must stand aloof from the Saint, and thus bear a Testimony to the Truth and Divinity of the Doctrine of *Christ*.

I grant that every one of these Instances, and all these Parts of eternal Life which I have now described, are not to be found equally in all Believers; nor are they in every Believer in a very eminent and evident Degree. But if we take all of them together, Pardon of Sin, Peace of Conscience, the Favour of God, and a Sense of his Love, a pleasurable Harmony of all our Powers, an Aversion to all Sin, and Hatred of every Iniquity, a holy Contempt of this World, in the Pleasures, as well as in the Pains and Sorrows of it; Delight in the Worship of God, and Desire after his Enjoyment; Zeal and Activity in Service for God, with a sincere Aim for his Glory, and a hearty Love to Fellow-Creatures and Fellow-Christians: I say, if we join all these together, we shall find that the Christian Religion has a Witness far superior to all other Doctrines that ever pretended to Divinity. We shall find that every Believer has something of all these Qualities wrought in his Heart, and
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it is exemplified in his Life. Truly, when none of these are found, that Person cannot profess himself a Christian with any just Ground of Hope; where there is not such a Witness as this to the Truth of Christianity, where there is not this eternal Life begun in some sensible Measure and Manner, that Person's Profession of Christianity is but vain; and his Practice and his Course contradict the Words of his Lips, when he pronounces himself a Believer in the Son of God.

I might here take Notice that the *Things that bear Witness on Earth* to the Truth of the Gospel, (*viz.*) *the Spirit, the Water, and the Blood*, may be expounded agreeably to the foregoing Discourse. *The Blood* may signify the Pacification of a guilty Conscience by the atoning Blood of Christ. *The Water* may intend the Sanctification and purifying of our Natures from sinful Appetites and Practices, as by the washing of *Water*: And the *Spirit* may imply the efficacious Influence which a Believer receives from the *Holy Spirit*, both towards the Pacification of his Conscience, and the Purification of his Soul. All these witness to the Truth of Christianity; tho' others are of Opinion, that the *Spirit* in his miraculous Operations, the *Water*, or Purity of the Nature and Life of Christ, and the *Blood*, or his violent Death, and the Attendants

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dants on it, are the three Witnesses on Earth which the Apostle designs; nor can I absolutely determine which is the right.

Before I conclude, I would lay down one Caution and one Reflection.

The *Caution* is this: That tho' I exclude all Human Religions from the Honour, Power, and glorious Effects of *Christianity*, as being utterly incapable of them, yet the *Jewish* Religion, and that of the antient Patriarchs, which were Divine, are not hereby totally excluded from this Honour, and these Characters, but only in Part: for there were many Souls in whom these Beginnings of Eternal Life were wrought under those Dispensations; but not with that Glory and Evidence as under the *Christian*. And indeed *Judaism* was but a Sort of *Infant-Christianity*, a veiled Gospel. The *Christian* Religion is *Judaism* fulfill'd, or the Gospel standing in open Light. All that *Holiness* and *Happiness* which was found among the *Jews* or Patriarchs, is entirely owing to *Christ* and his Gospel, to the Sacrifice, and the Spirit, and Grace of *Jesus*, which were typify'd by their Legal Atone-ments, and Blood, Sprinklings and Wash-ings; and which wrought powerfully this Divine Life in their Souls, thro' all those Types, but with feebler Conviction, and in a fainter Light.

Besides, it should be observed here also, that since the *Christian* Religion has received its full Authority and Divine Establishment, the *Jewish* Dispensation ceases, and is no longer owned, or aided by the Spirit of God, to produce these wonderful Effects. The Types and Shadows of that State have now no Power to speak Peace and Pardon to the guilty Soul, or to purify our sinful Natures, and begin Eternal Life in them. These are abolish'd by Divine Appointment, and God will bear witness to them no more. *They who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the Flesh, are Deceivers.* John Ep. ii. 7. *He that hath not the Son of God hath not Life,* 1 John v. 12. So that the Doctrine of *Christ* is the only Religion which we know of, that is practised in the World that has had the Stamp of Divine Authority above sixteen hundred Years; and as there have been multitudes of Witnesses to the Truth of it, multitudes of Souls in the first and all the succeeding Ages, who have found Eternal Life wrought in them by the Power of this Gospel, so there is no other Religion ever since can produce and show such Divine Testimony; for *there is Salvation in no other Name,* Acts iv. 12.

The only Reflection I shall make, is this. *We may derive hence a solid and infallible Rule for Self-Examination, whether we are Christians or no.* Have we in our selves this Divine

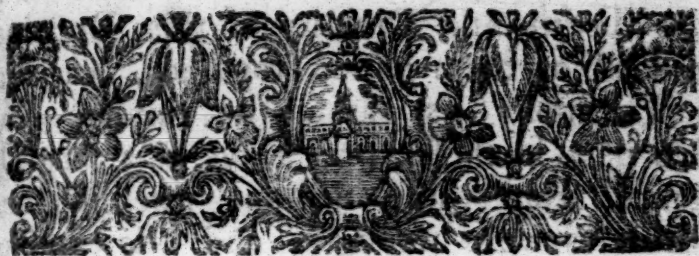
Witness of our Christianity? Have we Eternal Life wrought in our own Hearts? Have we derived Peace of Conscience, and any Hope of pardoning Grace, by trusting in the Son of God? Have we found any Satisfaction of Soul in drawing near to God by Jesus the Mediator? Do we find a sincere Love to God kindled in our Souls by the Hope of his special Favour? Is there any thing of the Holiness or Happiness of the heavenly State begun within us? Have we an Aversion to all Sin in some degree answerable to what the Saints and Angels have in Heaven? Have we a holy Contempt of this World? Have we overcome the World as those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and have put their Trust in him? Do we live above it, as those that are within Sight of Eternal Blessedness? Are we come to Mount Sion, the City of the living God, to the innumerable Company of Angels, and the Church of the First-born, &c. in this respect? Do we look down upon the tempting Vanities of this Life with a sacred Disdain, something like those that dwell on high in the full Possession of Life Eternal? Is there any Similitude between our Life and theirs, between our Hearts and theirs? Do we delight in the Worship of God? Is his Presence our Joy? Is his Enjoyment the Object of our Desires? Are we zealous for his Service? Are our Aims set for his Glory? Are we active in the Discharge of the Duties that

he hath appointed to us, and the several Provinces of Service that he has ordained us to be engaged in, in this World? Do we obey the Will of our heavenly Father on Earth in some Measure as it is done in Heaven? How stand our Hearts affected toward our Fellow-Creatures? Do we love our Neighbour, by dealing with him as we desire he should deal with us? Can we forgive our Enemies? Do we rejoice in the Welfare of others without Envy, and take Delight in the Holiness and Peace of our Fellow-Creatures, and give the poor and mean Followers of Christ a large Share in our Hearts and kindest Affections? If this be the Character and Temper of our Spirits, and this the Conduct of our Lives, then Eternal Life is begun in us; then we may say to our own Souls, *Thou hast the Record that God hath given concerning his Son, that there is Eternal Life in him; and are sure we build our Hopes on a solid Foundation, for this Life is already begun in our Hearts, and the Spirit of God, who has begun this Work, will carry it on, and make it perfect in the Days of Eternity.*
Amen.

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S E R M O N III.

The Inward Witness to Christianity.

I Ep. JOHN V. 10.

*He that believeth on the Son of God,
hath the Witness in himself.*

The Third Part.

ANY and glorious are the out-
ward Testimonies that God has
given to our Religion, both in
the Days when his Son *Jesus*
dwelt on Earth, and in the
Time of the Ministration of the Apostles
who followed their blessed Lord. The
Miracles wrought, the Prophecies fulfill'd,
and the various Glories attending the Mi-
nistration of the Gospel, conspire to confirm

our Faith; each of them are Evidences of the Truth and Divinity of this Doctrine and all of them joined together, bear such a Testimony as cannot be resisted. We live now in these latter Days at a long Distance from those Seasons wherein the Miracles were wrought, and wherein God appeared in so immediate a Manner from Heaven, to witness to the Truth of the Gospel of his Son; but God has taken care to furnish every true Believer with a sufficient Witness of Christianity; we are not left void of Evidence at this Day. *He that believeth, hath the Witness in himself.* There is an eternal Testimony given to the Gospel of *Christ* in the Heart of every one that receives it in Truth. There are the beginnings of that Eternal Life wrought in the Soul, which the Son of God bestows on all Believers; *he that hath the Son, hath Life.* The spiritual Life of a Christian runs into Eternity; 'tis the same Divine Temper, the same peaceful and holy Qualification of Mind communicated to the Believer here in the Days of Grace, which shall be fulfilled and perfected in the World of Glory and this is a blessed Witness to the Truth of Christianity; it proves with abundant Evidence, that 'tis a Religion sufficient to save Souls, for the Salvation is begun in every Man that receives it.

I shall repeat no more of the foregoing Discourses, but proceed immediately to answer the last Question there proposed, (*viz.*) *What sort of Witness this is, which true Faith gives to the Gospel of Christ, and what are the remarkable Properties of this Testimony.*

I answer,

I. It is a Witness that dwells more in the Heart than in the Head. 'Tis a Testimony known by being felt and practised, and not by meer Reasoning; the greatest Reasoners may miss of it, for it is a Testimony written in the Heart; and upon this Account it has some Prerogatives above all the external Arguments for the Truth of Christianity. This inward Argument is always at hand, when a Believer is in the Exercise of his Graces, and acting according to his new Nature and Life: 'tis an Arguments that is not lost thro' the Weakness of the Brain, the Defect of the Memory, and long Absence from Books and Study, to which other Argument are liable; 'tis an Argument that cannot be forgotten, while true Religion remains in the Heart, for 'tis graven there in lasting Characters.

Those Words of St. Paul to the Corinthians, in his 2d Epistle, Chap. iii. v. 2, 3. have a Reference to our present Case: *Ye are manifestly declared to be the Epistle of Christ ministred by us, written not with Ink, but with*

the Spirit of the living God; not in Tables of Stone, but in the fleshly Tables of the Heart. We have a Glory in our Religion, that distinguishes it from, and advances it above the *Jewish* Dispensation; their Law was written in Tables of Stone, and afterwards *Moses* wrote it out at large in a Book: But ye have something (says the Apostle) written in your Hearts, that proves the Truth of your Religion, and of my Divine Commission, ye who are converted by my Gospel; ye *Corinthians*, who were once vile as the vilest, and upon whose Souls the Devil, by his Temptations and by his Power, had inscribed many dark Characters, and seemed to seal you over and mark you to Damnation, ye are now the Epistle of *Christ*; ye have those dismal Characters rased out, and ye have golden and bright ones inscribed. The Image of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, who is eternal Life appears fairly written on your Souls: Ye are the Epistle of *Christ*, and eternal Life begun in you, and thus the Gospel witnesses its own Truth and Divinity by an internal Evidence.

The Gospel of *Christ* is like a Seal or Signet, of such inimitable and divine Graving, that no created Power can counterfeit it; and when the Spirit of God has stamp'd this Gospel on the Soul, there are so many holy and happy Lines drawn

Serm. III. *to Christianity.*

or impress'd thereby ; so many sacred Signatures and divine Features stamp'd on the Mind, that give certain Evidence both of a heavenly Signet, and a heavenly Operator.

A Christian, who has well studied the Doctrines and Proofs of Christianity, can give sufficient Reasons for the Truth of them, and for his believing them. He finds what is sufficiently satisfactory, to confirm his Belief in the outward Testimonies, in the Miracles wrought in the World, and the Prophecies fulfilled: " I
" have (*says he*) in my Understanding many Arguments and Evidences of the
" Truth of the Gospel, and my Reason is
" convinced that it's a Divine Religion.
" But there is a Miracle wrought in my
" Heart, that is of more efficacy than
" this, and is to me a more convincing
" Proof of the Gospel of *Christ*; Eternal
" Life is begun in me. I find my Conscience, that was disturbed with the
" Guilt of Sin, established in Peace, upon
" solid Hopes of Pardon. I have an Interest
" in the Love of God, and lively Sensations of that Love; I have a Hatred of
" all Sin, I live above the World, and
" have a holy Contempt of the Trifles,
" Businesses, and Cares of this Life; I delight in the Company of him that dwells
" in Heaven: I find in my Soul that I
" love

“love him, and love those who are like
 “him; I walk, as seeing him, who is in-
 “visible; I have a Zeal for his Glory, and
 “with active Diligence I’m employed for
 “the Honour of his Name in the World.
 “These Things I find wrought in me by
 “the Gospel of *Christ*: The *Discoveries* of
 “the *Nature* and *Works* of God, by this
 “Gospel, have filled my Soul with holy
 “Wonder, and bowed my Spirit down to
 “adore him. The *Revelations* of his ama-
 “zing *Condescension* and *Love*, have raised
 “and fired my Heart to love him; the
 “*Examples* of *superlative Piety* I meet with
 “in this Gospel, have excited my holy
 “*Imitation*; and the *Motives* proposed
 “here, are so awful and so alluring, that
 “all my Powers of Hope and Fear are
 “joined and engaged to constrain my Obe-
 “dience to the excellent and divine Pre-
 “cepts of this Religion. I feel that I am
 “quite altered from what once I was,
 “am a new Creature, and the Change is
 “Divine and Heavenly. There is some-
 “thing within me, that bears witness, that
 “my Religion is from God.”

II. It is a Witness that will, in some Meas-
 sure, appear in the Life, wheresoever it is
 written in the Heart: For eternal Life is
 an active Principle, it will be discovering
 and exercising itself: Is it possible, that
 Man should have the Pardon of his Sin

and sweet Peace of Conscience, a Sense of the Love of God, who is an infinite Good, a joyful Satisfaction in his heavenly Favour, and manifest nothing of this in his Aspect and Behaviour? That he should show no Serenity of Countenance, no Sweetness of Temper, no inward Joy? Is it possible that he should have an utter Aversion to Sin, a Hatred of all Iniquity in his Heart, and not make it appear in his Life? That he should maintain a holy Contempt of this World, and Scorn of it, in Comparison of the future Glories that his Eye is fixed upon, with so warm a Zeal for God, and so hearty a Love to Men; and not manifest it to the World? Surely his Life will be above, where his Heart is; and his Heart will be in Heaven, where his Treasures are. *Our Conversation is in Heaven*, says the blessed *Paul*, under the Influence of this Religion and these Hopes, *Phil. iii. ult.*

'Tis true indeed; this is a Testimony that cannot be communicated to others, in the same Measure and Manner that it is felt by the Persons that believe. In this Respect it is like the *hidden Manna*, which none knows but they that taste of it; yet those that feed upon it daily, will discover it in some outward Appearances; as you read of *Jonathan*, in the Day when he was faint in pursuing his Enemies, *He tasted of the Honey, and his Eyes were enlightened, 1 Sam.*

xiv. 27. Just so will it be with the Soul that hath tasted of the Gospel of *Christ*, this Food of eternal Life; he will discover it in his Language, in his Behaviour; and it's a Shame to those that profess to be Believers, that in all Things they look so much like the Men of this World, and don't discover it in their Lives, and witness what they have in their Hearts, even the Beginnings of eternal Life: If we are the *Epistle of Christ*, we shall be, in some Measure, *known and read of all Men*; 2 Cor. iii. 2, 3. Christianity in the Soul, eternal Life begun in the Heart, will be like the *sweet Ointment of the Right Hand*, that bewrays it self, and cannot be hid, *Prov. xxvii. 16.* Ye Christians, ye are the Light of the Earth, ye Believers are the Salt of the World; ye must not appear like others, if you would be like yourselves; the Honour of God your Saviour demands some sensible and important Difference. Ye must not be too much like the World, if ye mean to give Glory or Evidence to the Religion of *Christ*, John xv. 19. Rom. xii. 2.

III. Tho' this inward Evidence of the Truth of Christianity be of a spiritual Nature, and spring from pious Experience, yet it is a very rational Evidence also, and may be made out and justified to the strictest Reason. 'Tis no vain, fanciful, and enthusiastick Business; for while every Believer

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liever feels the Argument working strong in his Heart and Soul, he finds also the convincing Force of it upon his Understanding: While he feels his inward Powers sweetly inclined to Vertue and Holiness, which by Nature had strong Inclinations to Sensuality and Sin, and knows this was wrought in him purely by the Gospel of *Christ*; he cannot but infer, that must be a Divine Principle which has such Divine Effects. He knows that he was once blind and dead in Trespases and Sins, but now he is awake, and alive to God and to Righteousness; he is born again, he dwells, as it were, in a new World, there is a mighty and surprizing Change past upon him, even from Death to Life; and thence he concludes, by the justest Rules of Reasoning, that it must be a Doctrine of Divine Wisdom and Power, that gave him this blessed Resurrection: 'Tis above and beyond Nature, 'tis a Miracle of Grace, and none but God could work it.

And this is what I call *the inward Witness of the Spirit of God to the Truth of the Gospel*, at least in these latter Ages of Christianity. The outward and more visible Testimony of the Spirit consists in those sensible Miracles that were wrought, and those wondrous Gifts of Healing, of Tongues, &c. that were bestowed on the first Christians, *Heb. ii. 4. Rom. xv. 19.* But the Spirit's inward Testimony is the constant Miracle of Rege-

Regeneration and converting Grace. This Witness, in my Opinion, has been dishonoured by too many Protestants, when they have explained it meerly by inward Impulses, and vehement Impressions upon the Mind, without the Conduct of Reason. This has tempted the profane World to call our devoutest Efforts of Christian Piety meer Enthusiasm and wild Imagination, the Flashes of a kindled Blood and Vapours, that are puffed about with every Wind. But when the Testimony of the Spirit is explained in the Manner I have described, it must approve it self to all the sober and reasonable Part of Mankind.

Here let us stand still and consider; how great and divine a Power was necessary to make this mighty Change on the Heart of a poor, ignorant, guilty, sinful Creature, and establish him a Saint in Peace and Purity. 'Tis not every one that hears this same Gospel, that obtains the same Salvation, and that feels the same glorious Change; and many a true Christian must confess, how long they sat under the same Ministry and Instructions before their Hearts were brought to love God, or renewed to an heavenly Life: Thus their Experience teaches them, there was an Almighty Virtue and Efficacy at last attended this Gospel, which made it more powerful in one Day, or Week, or Month, than

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had been in whole Years before. There was a quickening Spirit, that accompanied the Voice of the Word, and gave them Life, while the Word called them to *arise from the Dead*. And this is yet more gloriously evident, when such Changes have been wrought on Sinners in an Hour or two: They went to hear the Gospel, poor, lame, blind, senseless and thoughtless of God and Eternity; and they were awakened, convinced of Sin and of Righteousness; they learnt their Ruin and their Recovery at once, through the Atonement and Grace of *Christ*: The Poor came home enriched with various Grace; the Blind see Wonders, and the Lame return leaping and rejoicing in the Hope of Glory. This gives plain Proof of a divine Doctrine, and a divine attending Spirit and Power.

'Tis the blessed Spirit of God, who dictated these Divine Truths of the Gospel, that accompanies them with his own Power to the Minds and Consciences of those who hear the Gospel preached, and by his own Power works this glorious Change in the Hearts and Lives of Sinners: 'Tis through the *Sanctification of the Spirit, and the Belief of the Truth*, that Sinners are called by the Gospel, to the obtaining of the Glory of our Lord *Jesus Christ*; 2 *Thess. ii. 13, 14*. 'Tis by the preaching of this Gospel, attended with this Spirit, that the *Fornicators and Adul-*

Adulterers become chaste, the *Thieves* and *Extortioners* are made honest and just, the *covetous* Earth-worms become heavenly-minded, the *Drunkards* are turned sober, and these Heirs of Hell are made fit to inherit the Kingdom of God. The Unclean are washed, the Unholy are sanctified, and the Guilty justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God; 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11. 'Tis the blessed Spirit the Comforter, that speaks Peace to the Conscience of Believers, through the atoning Blood of Christ; 'tis he sheds abroad the Love of God in their Hearts, by believing this Gospel, Rom. v. 5. and 'tis he that fills them with Love to God and to their Neighbour; for this Love is the Fruit of the Spirit, Gal. v. 22. and when the Spirit of God shines upon his own Work in the Soul of Man, and makes this glorious Change appear to the self-examining Christian, 'tis a noble Testimony that it gives to the Truth and Divinity of the Gospel of Christ.

IV. This Witness to the Truth of Christianity is certain and infallible, in the Nature and Reason of Things; and where this Divine Life arises to a considerable Height it gives a full Assurance to the Christian that his Religion is true. Eternal Life begun in the Soul, according to this Description of it, cannot rise from a false Principle; it must proceed from the God of Truth.

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Truth, who himself *is eternal Life* ; 1 John v. 20. and the Original and Spring of it to all his happy Creatures. If it were possible that any other Doctrine or Religion could work such an inward Witness in the Hearts of Sinners ; if it were possible that any meer human Gospel could give such a Life and Happiness as I have described, God would never have appointed his own Divine Gospel such a doubtful Witness. But I may say, God will never suffer so Divine a Testimony to belong to any Religion, but that which himself hath revealed ; and in our Day it can belong to none but the Gospel of our Lord *Jesus Christ*. If false Religions could have this Witness, could work this eternal Life in Sinners, we could hardly ever have sufficient Rules to judge of the true Religion by.

Rejoice then ye that have found this Witness in your Souls, that have eternal Life begun in you ; seek after no other Way to Heaven. Be not drawn aside from the Truth, but be stedfast. Ye cannot find such another Doctrine among Men, ye cannot find another Religion that can offer such Testimonies as this.

It is then a convincing, an infallible Witness ; such a new and heavenly Life wrought in the Heart, is a sure Proof that the Doctrine comes from God.

V. It is a strong and powerful Witness, and ever ready to baffle the most learned Sophisms, and the boldest Temptations. It lies so near, and is always at Hand, that 'tis a present Shield against every flying Arrow from the Camp of Infidelity. 'Tis an Argument drawn from Sense and vital Experience, and it effectually answers all the subtle Cavils of false Reasoning. Suppose a crafty Philosopher should pretend to prove that Bread is not wholesome, that Water is useless to allay Thirst, or Wine is meer Poison; I may boldly maintain the Wholesomeness, and the happy Use of Bread, Water, and Wine; for I am daily nourished by this Bread, my Thirst has been perpetually quenched by Water, and I have often found and felt this Wine refresh me. The Quibbles of Logick, against the Sense and Experience of a true Christian, are but a Darts of Straw and Stubble against the Scales of a Leviathan.

When the *Greeks*, who seek after Learning, say to a Christian, "How can this Gospel be true and divine, which is so plain and simple in it self, which was preached by a Parcel of Fishermen, and invented by a Carpenter, and his Followers that published it had no more Learning than he? How is it possible such a Religion should be from God, that hath so much of unlearned Simplicity?"

"in it?" But the Christian can tell them, that all the Wisdom and Learning of the Philosophers could never do such Miracles as this Gospel has done, could never work such a divine Life and Temper in my Heart.

When the *Jews* shall say, "How can this be the *Messiah*? for the *Messiah*, the Son of God, must be a great King, a Governor of the Earth, must deliver the *Jews* from their Slavery, must have Power over all the Nations; how could this be the *Messiah*, that was crucified among his Countrymen, and we, with our Fellow-Citizens, join'd together to put him to Death, and he lay like a meer Mortal in his Grave? How can this be the Saviour, or can his Religion be true?" The *Christian*, that is called of God, and has found the Witness in himself, makes answer, He that was Foolishness to the *Greeks*, and a Scandal to the *Jews*, is the Wisdom of God, and the Power of God to me. I have seen my Sins nailed to the Cross of this Redeemer; I have found a Way for the Pardon of all my Iniquities, and the Satisfaction of my Conscience, (which was before full of Anguish) in and from the Cross of this *Messiah*; I have found Holiness wrought in my Soul by the Belief of this Gospel; I have felt such Virtue proceeding from this Saviour, that

I, who was before all over unclean, and defiled, am, in some Degree, made holy: This Gospel therefore must be from God, and this is the *Messiah* his Son.

When the *Deists* of our Age shall object and say, “How can ye believe such a Religion to be divine, that is delivered in so poor and mean a Way, as the Story of *Christ*, and all the strange Doctrines of your Gospel? How can the Bible be the Word of God? not only because there are so many Obscurities and mystical Speeches in it; but it has so many weak Things in it, that a learned Man in our Day would be ashamed to write it. How can this Gospel be the Revelation of God, that wants so much of the Beauty of Oratory and strong Reasoning, which the Wisdom of Man pretends to, and daily performs?” But the *Christian* answers; “The Gospel, that is contained here, must be from God: for although it has so much human Weakness in your Eyes, I have felt a Divine Power attending it, it hath been to me the Power of God unto Salvation. Let it want therefore what human Ornaments it will, if it has Divine Efficacy in it, I am sure it is from above.”

Thus whatsoever Temptations are proposed to baffle his Faith, and to stagger his Belief of the Doctrine of *Christ*,

one Instance of its Divinity, keeps the Believer steady: "I have found it of efficacy to begin Eternal Life in me, therefore I know it is from God."

But as to this sort of *Objections*, against the Truth and Divinity of our Religion, arising from the doubtful or difficult Evidence of the Books of Scripture, we may fetch a noble *Answer* from the Experimental Testimony of which I am now speaking: and this shall be the *sixth* Property of this inward Witness.

VI. It is such a Witness to the Truth of the Christian Religion, as does not depend on the exact Truth of Letters and Syllables, and the critical Knowledge of the Copies of the Bible, nor on this old Manuscript, or on t'other new Translation: for how great soever the Difference may be between the various antient Copies of the Books of Scripture, or the elder or later Translation of it, either in Protestant or Popish Countries; yet the Substance of Christianity is so scattered thro' all the New Testament, and especially among the Epistles, that every Manuscript and every Translation has enough of the Gospel to save Souls by it, and make a Man a Christian indeed. How full of Noise and Controversy has the Christian World been, especially in the learned Ages of it, in order to adjust and settle the true Books

Books of Scripture, the true Verses, and the true Reading? How many doubtful Words have crept into some of the written Copies by the Mistakes of Transcribers? And how exceeding hard, if not impossible, is it in many Cases to judge which was the true and authentick Word or Sentence? But the humble and sincere Christian has learnt so much of the same Gospel, in which all Copies agree, as has renewed his sinful Nature, and wrought a Divine Life in him, and therefore he is sure the Substance of this Gospel must be from God.

Nay, if this Property of the inward Witness be duly considered a little further in the Nature and Attendants of it, we shall find that every true Christian has a sufficient Argument and Evidence to support his Faith, without being able to prove the Authority of any of the Canonical Writings. He may hold fast his Religion, and be assured that 'tis Divine, tho' he cannot bring any learned Proof that the Book that contains it is Divine too; nay, though the Book itself should ever happen to be lost or destroyed: and this will appear with open and easy Conviction, by asking a few such Questions as these:

Was not this same Gospel preached with glorious Success before the New Testament was written? Were not these same Doctrines

Doctrines of Salvation by *Jesus Christ*, published to the World by the Ministry of the Apostles, and made effectual to convert thousands, before they set themselves to commit the Doctrines to Writing? And had not every sincere Believer, every true Convert, blessed Witness in himself, that Christianity was from God? Eight or ten Years past away, after the Ascension of Christ, were any Part of the New Testament written, (as learned Men conceive) and unknown Multitudes of Christian Converts were born again by the preaching of the Word, and raised to a Divine and Heavenly Life, long e'er this Book was half sold or known, and that among *Heathens* as well as *Jews*? And tho' the Scriptures of the Old Testament might prepare the Minds of some of these to receive the Gospel, yet we have reason to believe, that great Numbers, especially of the *Gentile* World, were convinced by Miracles, and Arguments, and some, perhaps, by meer Narratives and Exhortations, and became holy Men; each of them the Epistle of *Christ* written in the Heart, and bearing about in them a noble and convincing Proof that this Religion was Divine, and that without a written Gospel, without Epistles, and without a Bible.

In the first Ages of Christianity, these same several hundred Years together, how few

few among the common People were able to read? How few could get the Possession or the Use of a Bible, when all sacred as well as profane Books must be copied by writing? How few of the Populace, in a large Town or City, could obtain, or could use any small Part of Scripture, before the Art of Printing made the Word of God so common? and yet Millions of them were regenerated, sanctified, and saved by the Ministration of this Gospel. The Sum, and Sense, and Substance of this Divine Doctrine communicated to the Nations in various Forms of Speech, and in different Phrases, made a Divine Impression on their Minds, being attended by the Power of the blessed Spirit; and while it stamp'd its own sacred Image on their Souls, it transformed their Natures into Holy and Heavenly, and created so many new Witnesses to the Truth of the Gospel, for it begun Eternal Life in them.

Consider then, Christians, and be convinced, that the Gospel has a more noble inward Witness belonging to it, than is derived from Ink and Paper, from printed Letters and Syllables: And tho' God, by his great Wisdom and Goodness, saw necessary that the New Testament should be written, to preserve these holy Doctrines uncorrupted through all Ages; and that he has pleased to appoint the written Word

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to be the invariable and authentick Rule of our Faith and Practice, and made it a glorious Instrument of instructing Ministers and People to Salvation in all these later Times: yet Christianity has a secret Witness in the Hearts of Believers, that does not depend on their Knowledge and Proof of the Authority of the Scriptures, nor of any of the Controversies that in late Ages have attended the several Manuscript Copies, and different Readings and Translations of the Bible.

Now this is of admirable Use and Importance in the Christian Life, upon several Accounts: as,

(1.) If we consider how few poor unlearned Christians there are, who are capable of taking in the Arguments which are necessary to prove the Divine Authority of the Sacred Writings; and few, even among the Learned, can well adjust and determine many of the different Readings, or different Translations of particular Scriptures. Now a wise Christian does not build his Faith and Hope meerly upon any one or two single Texts, but upon the general Scope, Sum, and Substance of the Gospel, the great Doctrines of the Satisfaction for Sin by the Blood of *Christ*, and the Renewal of our corrupt Natures by the Holy Spirit, the Necessity of Faith in *Christ*, Repentance of Sin, and sincere Holiness,

linefs, in order to Salvation and heavenly Glory ; and by thefe he feels a fpiritual Life of Peace and Piety begun in him : And here lies his Evidence that Chriftianity is Divine, and that thefe Doctrines are from Heaven, tho' a Text or two may be written falfe, or wrong tranflated, or tho' a whole Book or two may be hard to be proved authentick.

The Learned well know what need there is of turning over the Hiftories of antient Times, of the Traditions and Writings of the Fathers, and Authors, pious and profane ; what need of critical Skill in the holy Languages, and in antient Manuscripts ; what a wide Survey of various Circumftances of Fact, Time, Place, Style, Language, &c. is neceffary to confirm one or another Book or Verfe of the New Teftament, and to answer the Doubts of the Scrupulous, and the bold Objections of the Infidel ; what laborious Reasoning are requifite to found our Faith on the bottom. Now how few of the common Rank of Chriftians, whofe Hearts are laid with true Faith in the Son of God and real Holinefs, have Leifure, Books, Inftuctions, Advantages, and Judgment fufficient to make a thorow Search into thefe Matters, and to determine, upon a juft View of Argument, that thefe Books were written by the facred Authors

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Name they bear, and that these Authors were under an immediate Inspiration in writing them? What a glorious Advantage is it then to have such an infallible Testimony to the Truth of the Gospel wrought and written in the Heart by renewing Grace, as does not depend on this laborious, learned, and argumentative Evidence of the Divine Authority of the Bible, or of any particular Book or Verse of it.

(2.) If we consider what bold Assaults are sometimes made upon the Faith of the unlearned Christian, by the Deists and Unbelievers of our Age, by disputing against the Authority of the Scripture, by ridiculing the strange Narratives and sublime Doctrines of the Bible, by setting the seeming Contradictions in a blasphemous Light, and then demanding, "How can you prove, or how can you believe, that this Book is the Word of God, or that the Religion it teaches is Divine?" In such an Hour of Contest, how happy is the Christian, that can say, "Tho' I am not able to solve all the Difficulties in the Bible, nor maintain the sacred Authority of it against the Cavils of Wit and Learning; yet I am well assured that the Doctrines of this Book are sacred, and the Authority of them divine: for when I heard and received them, they changed my Nature, they subdued my sinful

" Appetites, they made a new Creature
 " of me, and raised me from Death to Life;
 " they made me love God above all Things,
 " and gave me the lively and well-grounded
 " Hope of his Love: therefore I cannot
 " doubt but that the chief Principles of
 " this Book are heavenly and divine, tho' I
 " cannot so well prove that the very
 " Words and Syllables of it are so too;
 " for 'tis the Sense of Scripture, and not the
 " meer Letters of it, on which I build my
 " Hope."

I might say yet further, (3.) This inward Witness gives great Support in Hours of Darknes and Temptations of the Devil, when such sudden Thoughts shall be thrown into the Mind even of a learned Christian: " What if the Scripture should
 " not be Divine? What if this Gospel and
 " t'other Epistle should not be written by
 " Inspiration? What if these should be
 " meerly the Works of Men, and not the
 " very Word of God?" The Believer
 who feels a renewed Nature, and a divine Life working within him, can boldly repel these fiery Darts of *Satan*, with such a Reply as this: " Tho' I cannot at present
 " recollect all the Arguments that prove
 " *Matthew, Mark, and Luke* to be divine
 " Historians, or *Peter and Paul* to be
 " inspired Writers; yet the Substance and
 " chief Sense of their Gospels and the
 " Epistles

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“ Epistles must needs be Divine, and God
“ is the Author of it, for it has begun the
“ spiritual and eternal Life in my Soul ; and
“ this is my Witness (or rather the Witness
“ of the Spirit of God within me) that *Christ*
“ is the Son of God, the Saviour of Sinners,
“ and the Religion that I profess and pra-
“ ctise is safe and divine.

And tho’ there are many and sufficient Arguments drawn from Criticism, History, and human Learning, to prove the sacred Authority of the Bible, and such as may give abundant Evidence to an honest Enquirer, and full Satisfaction that ’tis the Word of God ; yet this is the chief Evidence that the greatest Part of Christians can ever attain of the Divine Original of the Holy Scripture it self, as well as the Truth of the Doctrines contained in it, (viz.) That they have found such a holy and heavenly Change passed upon them, by reading or hearing the Propositions, the Histories, the Promises, the Precepts, and the Threatnings of this Book : And thence they are wont to infer, that the God of Truth would not attend a Book, which was not agreeable to his Mind, with such glorious Instances of his own Power and Grace. Tho’ it must be still confessed, that this Argument is much stronger, and the Evidence brighter for the general Truth of Christianity, than it can possibly be for

the sacred Authority of any one Verse or Chapter of the New Testament.

I have dwelt the longer on this *sixth* Property of the inward Witness, because I think it of great Importance in our Age, which has taken so many Steps towards Heathenism and Infidelity: for this Argument or Evidence will defend a Christian in the Profession of his Religion, tho' he may not have Skill enough to defend his Bible.

VII. This is *an universal Witness* to the *Truth of the Gospel*, for it belongs to every true *Christian*. The Weak, as well as the Strong, enjoy this inward Evidence in some measure and degree. This is an Argument of some Force and Conviction to him, who is but young in Grace and Knowledge, as well as to him that has made high Advances in the Faith, and is grown up to the Stature of a Man in *Christ*. Tho' it must be acknowledged, that where Faith and Love, Holiness and Peace are weak, the Evidence of this Testimony is weak also; yet it may sometimes stand firm and strong, and shine bright in those Christians, whose intellectual Powers are but mean and low. Some Persons of great Holiness, may have but little natural Parts, poor Understandings, a mean Education, and can scarce give any clear rational Account of the Things of this World or of that which is to come; and these enjoy a great Degree of this inward Witness.

the Truth of Christianity, that a divine Life is begun in them, and that the Gospel has effectually wrought in them a new Nature; *Those great and precious Promises of the Gospel having made them Partakers of the Divine Nature*, they are sure those Promises must be Divine, 2 Pet. i. 4. & 1 Cor. i. 22, 23. Not many *Wise*, not many *Mighty*, not many *Noble* are called; but God hath chosen the *Poor*, and the *Weak*, and *foolish Things of this World*, to confound the *Wise* and the *Mighty*: Nor yet hath he chosen, or called one of them, without giving them a sufficient Witness to the Truth of that Gospel, by and to which they are called. 'Tho' they cannot argue for the Doctrine of *Christ*, yet they find *Christ dwelling within them the Hope of Glory*; Col. i. 27. They find the Characters of *Christ* copied out in their Hearts, and the Life of *Christ*, in some Measure, transcribed in their Lives. They find something of sacred Influence from the Gospel of *Christ*, which no other Doctrines can pretend to; therefore tho' they cannot give a rational Account, which shall answer all the Cavils of Men why they believe Christianity, thro' the Weakness of their Knowledge, yet their Faith in *Christ* is strong; for they are sure the Doctrine is Divine, because of the sweet and sanctifying Influence it has upon them.

How condescending is God to poor Sinners, to give such a Religion to be saved by, that every one who receives it shall have an infallible Witness in himself of the Truth of it, without the Learning of the Schools, and the Knowledge of Tongues! Their chief Argument for it is, they have Divine Holiness, and Divine Peace.

VIII. This inward Witness of the Truth of Christianity, *is, or should be, always growing and improving.* The Testimony encreases as the Divine Life encreases; the greater the Degree of Holiness we arrive at, the more are we confirmed in the Truth of Christianity, the Testimony grows stronger, 2 Cor. iii. 18. You find that Text approves of what I have now argued. When the Apostle had been distinguishing between the Religion of the Law, and that of the Gospel; that the one was covered with a Veil, but under the other this Veil was taken away: *We*, says he, under the Gospel, *with open Face beholding, as in a Glass, the Glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same Image from Glory to Glory.* We who behold the Face of Christ Jesus in his Gospel, we who here see a God reconciled in and by the Death of his Son, we who see the Holiness of Christ here described, copied, and exemplied, we are changed into the same Image. The Image of Christ is transcribed upon our Natures, we

on from one Degree of it to another; *we are changed from Glory to Glory*, from one degree of glorious Holiness to another: thereby the Gospel appears to have a fairer, a brighter, and a stronger Evidence.

Thence it comes to pass, that when Christians have grown to a good Degree of Strength in Faith, and great Measures of Holiness in this World, all the Temptations that they meet with to turn them aside from the Doctrines of *Christ*, are esteemed but as Straw and Stubble; they cannot move nor stir them from the Faith that is in *Jesus*, because the Evidence hath grown strong with Years: and as they have attended long upon the Ministrations of this Gospel, they have found more and more of this Eternal Life wrought in their Hearts; they have got nearer to Heaven, they have pressed on continually towards Perfection, they have found sweet Assurance of the Pardon of Sin in their Conscience, and diviner Sensations of the Love of God communicated to them, and their own Love both to God and Man encreasing; they have found their Hearts more averse to all Iniquity, they have felt themselves rising higher and higher above this World, as they have come nearer to the end of their Days; and a holy Contempt of this World has grown bolder: they take greater Delight in God, and more

gustful Satisfaction in his Worship, and in his Company: their Zeal for his Honour is warmer and stronger; they are perpetually employing themselves in Contrivances for the Glory of God among Men. Thus in every Part of this Spiritual Life the Testimony encreases, the Evidence grows brighter, as Eternal Life advances in them.

In the *last Place*: As 'tis a growing Witness, so it is *such a one as never can be utterly lost*; and that Character of it is derived from the very Name, for it is *Eternal Life*. Where it is once wrought in the Soul, it shall be everlasting, it shall never die. *The Seed of God abides* in those that are *born of God*, 1 John iii. 9. for they are *born of incorruptible Seed, but of incorruptible, even the Word of God, which lives and abides forever*, 1 Pet. i. 23. His Gospel, which is an everlasting Gospel, continues that heavenly Work in the Soul, which that Gospel did first begin.

It may be darkened indeed, it may be hidden for a Season; sometimes the violent Temptations of the Evil-one, may, as it were, stop the Mouth of this Divine Witness; and sometimes, defiling Lusts rising upon the Face of the Soul, may darken these Evidences, but can never entirely blot them out. *Eternal Life* must abide for ever, according to the Name and Nature of it. Tho' the Evidence for a Season

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may be obscure, and may seem to be silent through the Power of Iniquity, and the Strength of Temptation; yet this Life will resume its Activity, and discover it self, because its Nature is *Eternal*. 'Tis *Christ Jesus* living in the Soul by the Power of his own *Spirit*; *Christ Jesus* who is the Eternal Principle of Life, and his Spirit, which is the Eternal Spirit: and where he hath begun to dwell, he shall for ever inhabit.

This Evidence shall continue to all Eternity, and shall give many a sweet Reflection to the Saints in Heaven. "I feel now (says every Saint there) that this was a true Gospel I trusted in, in the Days of my Flesh; and this Religion was Divine, for it hath raised me to these Mansions of Blessedness. I feel now it was a Doctrine came down from Heaven, and that *Christ Jesus* was not an Impostor, but the Son of God indeed, for he has brought me to his Father's House by this Doctrine; he hath seated me upon his own Throne, even as he is seated upon the Throne of his Father: he hath made me an Overcomer by believing this Doctrine, even as he himself has overcome." Eternal Life it self, in the Perfection of it in the future World, shall be a standing and everlasting Evidence of the Truth of the Gospel.

I will now endeavour to draw some few Inferences or Remarks from the Discourse, and then conclude.

1. The first *Remark* is very obvious, *How glorious is the Gospel of our Lord!* How preferable to all other Religions! Those which Men have invented, are not to come into Competition with it; let none of them be named. Even that Religion which God himself invented, the Religion of the *Jews*, had not such honourable Characters belonging to it, as this of our Saviour hath. Many Expressions that are used in the Epistles of *St. Paul*, to shew the Superiority of the Gospel above the Law, are such as give it an infinite Advantage and Preference: as in point of Glory, so in point of Evidence too. One was the *Letter*, the other is the *Spirit*; one was the *Ministration of Condemnation*; the other of *Salvation*; one the *Ministration of Death*, the other of *Life*: and as Life, Spiritual or Eternal Life, is represented as the peculiar Effect and Prerogative of the Gospel, so it carries more Light of Evidence with it to confirm its heavenly Original; it brings the believing Soul much nearer to Heaven.

The *Jewish* Religion, instituted by *Moses*, although, by the accompanying Power of the Spirit of God, it wrought effectually in the Hearts of those that sincerely received it, and changed their Natures in

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saving Manner; yet the Brightness and Glory of this Sort of Evidence that belonged to that Religion, was derived from the Gospel which was hidden under the Types of it: nor could it be supposed to have equal Brightness or Force with the Gospel it self, when unveiled, and shining in open Light; as I have shown in the second Discourse.

The *Jews*, when they had offered all their Sacrifices for the Hope of the Pardon of their Sins, and looked as far as they could look through the Smoak and Shadows, to see the *Messiah* at a Distance, could never have their Consciences so sweetly released from Fears, and the Sense of Guilt, as Christians, under the Gospel, may enjoy through the Blood of *Christ*: never had they so much Communion with God in Love, as since 'tis manifested by *Christ Jesus*, the Son of his Love, that came from his Bosom. Never were they raised so high above the World, nor could any of the *Jews* be so refin'd in their Hopes and Joys, and exult in the view of heavenly Glories, as a Christian may be, and do, since the Vail is withdrawn, and *Life and Immortality are brought to light by the Gospel*, 2 Tim. i. 10. Never could they triumph over all the Terrors of Death, and the Horror and Darknes of the Grave, as St. *Paul* the Christian often does, and teaches his

his Fellow-Saints the same triumphal Song, 1 Cor. xv. 54, &c. I grant that a single Person or two, like *David*, might now and then, by the Spirit of Rapture and Prophecy, be born far above that Dispensation it self, and might have noble Views and Joys; but the whole Church under that State, had but darker Apprehensions of Things above this Life, and beyond Death; their spiritual Things were so much mingled and interwoven with a worldly Dispensation, and their Sanctuary it self called a *Worldly Sanctuary*. So much Carnality entered into the Scheme of their Constitution, that they could not be raised so high above this World, and the Things of this Life, as Christians under the Gospel: they could never have such a Sense of Forgiving-Grace, nor so sweet a Satisfaction in drawing near to God, as Christians now have; nor were they so expressly commanded, nor could, nor did they so gloriously practise the Duties of Love and Forgiveness to Men, as the Christian Religion requires, and works in the Hearts of sincere Believers.

2d Remark. You learn here an excellent Rule for Self-Examination, whether you have true Faith or no. If you have, it will be accompanied with this Evidence: for that Eternal Life begun in the Soul, does not merely prove that Christianity is a

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Doctrine, but it proves also that the Faith of that Person is true, where this Eternal Life is begun. This is mentioned in the foregoing Sermon, therefore I shall pass it over briefly. The Apostle asserts this sufficiently, v. 13. *These Things have I written to you who believe in the Name of the Son of God, that ye may know ye have Eternal Life.* The Duties of Morality, both of the first and second Table, will be written upon the Heart, and will, in some degree, be practised in the Life, where the Gospel is written in the Heart, and where Christianity is wrought in its Power in the Soul. But on the other Hand, those who neglect the Duties of the first Table, or indulge themselves in a very careless Performance of them; those who pass by the Duties of the second Table, and those relative Engagements which they lie under to their Neighbour by the Law of God, can never have the Evidence within themselves, neither of the Truth of Christianity, nor of the Truth of their own Faith: they may be *Heathens*, they may be *Heroes*, they may be *Philosophers*, they may be any Thing but Christians.

3d Remark. Learn the true Method of confirming your Souls in the Christian Faith: seek daily greater Degrees of this Divine Life wrought in you. This Advice is also hinted by the Apostle John, in the 13th ver.

I have written these Things to you concerning the Witness of Christianity, that consists in having Eternal Life begun in you, not only that ye may know ye have it, but that ye may go on to believe on the Name of the Son of God. We have need in our Day to be well seasoned with Arguments against the Dangers of the Times, and Temptations of the Age in which we dwell. Christianity begins to be a Stumbling-block, and the Doctrine of the Gospel is called Folly; it is reproached to a very great and shameful Degree, in a Nation, which in publick professes Christianity. When we therefore shall be attacked with Arguments to baffle our Faith, and when the Wind of false Doctrine shall grow strong, and shall carry away many; how shall we be able to stand our ground, and hold fast our Faith in *Christ*, if we have not this inward Witness, the Beginnings of Eternal Life: therefore it is that so many Christians waver and are led away, sometimes to this new Doctrine, sometimes to another, because they feel so little of the Efficacy and Power of the Gospel in their Hearts, so very little of Holiness and Eternal Life within them.

If you cannot argue for the Gospel with Learning, nor from Experience, what will ye do in an Hour of Temptation? For the most Part, Christians are too little bred

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to those Methods of Knowledge, whereby they might be capable of giving large, and rational, and satisfactory Answers to those that may set themselves to oppose the Truth and Progress of the Gospel. What will you do in the Darkness of such a Temptation, when those that are learned and ingenious shall attack your Faith, and say, "Why do you believe in *Jesus*?" If you have this Answer ready at Hand, "I have found the Efficacy and Power of the Gospel on my Heart;" this will be sufficient to answer all their Cavils. It was one way whereby Christianity was confirmed in the Hearts of the Martyrs of old, and whereby they were enabled to bear up against all Oppositions, because they found such a Divine Efficacy attending the Gospel, such a new and heavenly Life wrought in them, as enabled them to go through great Hardships for the sake of *Christ*. But this leads me to

4. The fourth *Remark*, (*viz.*) If there be this inward Evidence belonging to the Gospel, and those that truly believe, then you have a strong Encouragement to profess Christianity under the greatest Persecutions. It will bear you out, it carries its own Evidence with it; Christianity in the Heart will give Courage against Temptation. *Think it not strange concerning the fiery Tryal*, says the Apostle *Peter*, for in such a fiery Tryal the
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Gospel hath secured Thousands; therefore, says St. Paul, tho' I meet with Reproaches wheresoever I go, tho' Bonds and Imprisonments await me, and Death it self, *Acts. xxi.* yet *I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, Rom. i. 16. for it's the Power of God to Salvation, to every one that believes.* Which is but the Sense of my Text in other Words. Every one that believes it in Truth, hath this Evidence in himself, even Eternal Life: *Therefore I count not my Life dear to me,* &c. for the Gospel will bear me out in my Profession of it, in my Publication of it, and in my Suffering for it. This is the way we shall learn to resist unto Blood, and seal the Truth of this Gospel with our mortal Lives, if we have the Seal of this Truth abiding in our Souls.

5th Remark. As from this Doctrine you have strong Encouragement to profess Christianity, so you are here taught the best way to honour the Gospel, and to propagate the Christian Religion in the World. Make this inward Divine Testimony appear to the World; let the Eternal Life that is wrought in your Souls by this Gospel, express it self in all your outward Behaviour amongst Men. Thus the Primitive Christians did, and it was their Work to propagate the Faith of Christ this way. The Gentiles and Unbelievers were won by their Conversation, *1 Pet. iii. 1.* Thus the Apostles

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did, who were as so many Captains and Officers in the Army of Christians, going before the Camp, and making War against all the Idolatry of the Heathens. They made that eternal Life which was wrought in their Souls, appear publickly, and discover it self unto Men, and hereby the Gospel gained Victory and Triumph where-soever it went. When those who were ignorant of Faith and its Power, came into the Assemblies of Christians, and found the Gospel to be a Doctrine of such divine Attendants, it convinced their Consciences, and changed many of them into new Creatures; *they fell down, and confessed that there is a God among the Christians of a Truth.* When they see your Conversation, when they behold your Faith and holy Fear, your Zeal for God, your Delight in his Worship, your Gentleness, your Meekness, Kindness, and Goodness towards your Fellow-Creatures, your Desire of the Salvation of Men, and Readiness to deny your selves for their Good; when the *Heathens* know and behold this, they shall be won (says the Apostle) by such a Conversation as this is, to the Belief of the same Doctrine, and Practice of the same Duties.

O what unknown Millions of Arguments would support and adorn the Doctrine of *Christ*, if every Professor of it had this inward Testimony working powerfully in the Soul,

Soul, and breaking forth in the Life! How effectually would it silence the most impudent Objectors! When they shall put that Question to you, "What do you more than others?" You would make it appear in your Lives, that the Gospel is true and divine, by challenging all the Philosophers and all the Priests and Devotees of other Religions, to show such Men and Women as *Christians* are such Husbands and Wives, such Parents and Children, such Masters and Servants, such Lovers of God and Man. O how happy would it be for the Christian Name and Interest in the World, if those who profess the Gospel of *Christ*, could make a bold and universal Challenge upon this Head! O when the *Deists* shall insult and say to a Believer, What is *Jesus of Nazareth* more than another Man, that you love and adore him so? Or in the Language of the carnal Jew, *What is thy Beloved more than another Beloved*, that thou makest so much ado about him? The Discovery of *Christ* reigning in the Soul by his renewing Grace, will be a sufficient Evidence that he is the Son of God, that his Character and his Person are divine, that his Mission is from above; that he is the chiefest of Ten Thousands, and altogether lovely.

It is worth while for us now to take a Survey of our selves, to look back upon our Lives and ask, "What Testimonies have we given

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“to the Glory of this Gospel, and to the
 “Truth of the Religion of *Christ*? Have we
 “not sometimes rather been Scandals to
 “Christianity? Have not our Practices been
 “Blots instead of Evidences, and Discou-
 “ragements to the Unbeliever, instead of Al-
 “lurements? Have we not sometimes laid
 “Stumbling-blocks in the Way of those that
 “have had the Look of an Eye, and some
 “Tendency of Heart towards it?” This
 will be an awakening Thought, and painful
 to Conscience in the Review.

Have we not much Reason to mourn that
 there are some among us who walk as Ene-
 mies of the Cross of *Christ*? *Philip. iii. 18.* I
 would have you, says the Apostle, *be Follow-*
ers of me, walk as I walk, as you have me for an
Example. I would have you walk as those
 who have eternal Life begun in them, that
 you may be Honours to the Gospel. But
 there are many who walk, of whom I have told
 you often, and now tell you even weeping, they
 are Enemies of the Cross, and Dishonours to the
 Gospel, instead of Evidences of the Truth of
 it; *their End is Destruction, their God is their*
Belly, and their Glory is in their Shame: whereas
our Conversation is in Heaven, whence we expect
Jesus the Saviour. We who are here upon
 Earth, and have believed the Gospel of *Christ*,
 we should live as though we had part of our
 selves in Heaven already, our Conversation
 should be so holy and divine. Eternal Life
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begun in our Hearts, should break out, and disclose it self, and shine bright among the Persons we converse with. O! how much is the Propagation of the Gospel obstructed, how much the Honour of our Lord Jesus Christ obscured, and how much the Good of Souls prevented and hindered by those that discover not this eternal Life, this sacred Witness, in the Holiness of Heart and Practice! But Beloved, we hope better Things of you, and Things that accompany Salvation, tho' we then speak; and yet we must speak thus, with a sacred Jealousy for the Glory and Evidence of this Gospel, with a warm Concern for the Peace and Welfare of your Souls, and with holy Zeal for the Conversion of the unbelieving World to the Faith of God our Saviour.





S E R M O N IV.

Flesh and Spirit ; or, the Principles of
Sin and Holiness.

R O M. viii. 1.

—Who walk not after the *Flesh*, but
after the *Spirit*.

W H E N we use the Words *Flesh*
and *Spirit*, in their literal and
proper Sense, all Men know
what we mean by them : *Flesh*
generally signifies the *Animal*
Nature ; that is, the Body and Blood, &c.
and *Spirit* means an *Intelligent* Nature that
has Understanding and Will. When these
are attributed to Man, they are but other
Names to express those two distinct Beings,
the Body and Soul, that make up Human
Nature.

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But these Words are often in Scripture used *metaphorically*, and that in various Senses; yet the Metaphor, as it stands in my Text, hath such Justness and Propriety in it, that the Sense of it is not very difficult to be traced, being happily and nearly derived from the proper and literal Meaning.

'Tis plain that St. Paul uses this Expression of *walking after the Flesh*, to signify a *Course of Sin*, and by *walking after the Spirit*, he describes a *Course of Holiness*. This is the Character of such as *believe in Christ*, and to whom belongs no *Condemnation*, that they *walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit*; they live not in a *Course of Sin*, nor according to sinful Principles, but follow the Principles of Holiness that are wrought in them.

Thus the Word *Flesh* signifies and includes *all the Principles and Springs of Sin that are found in Man*, whether they have their immediate and distinct Residence in the Body or in the Soul. The Word *Spirit* signifies and includes *all the Principles of Holiness that are wrought in any Person*, whether immediately residing in Soul or Body. And among the many Places of Scripture where they are so used, those Words of our Lord himself to Nicodemus, John iii. 6. seem to make this most evident: *What is born of the Flesh is Flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is Spirit*; by which he means to assert, That

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what comes by natural Generation tends towards Sin, and what is derived from the Operation of the Spirit of God leads to Holiness. Or, *more plainly thus*; All the Principles of Sin spring from meer Nature, as derived from our Parents, and are called *Flesh*; and, *on the contrary*, all the Principles of Holiness spring from the Spirit of God, and are called *Spirit*; and thence his Argument derives the *Necessity of being born again*, or born from above. In the first Part of these two Sentences, *Flesh* and *Spirit* are taken literally for the *Flesh of Man*, and the *Spirit of God*. In the latter End of the Sentences, *Flesh* and *Spirit* must be taken figuratively, for the *Principles of Sin*, and the *Principles of Holiness*.

Now since the Apostle frequently uses the Terms *Flesh* and *Spirit* in the same Sense which his Lord and Master put on them, and talks often on this Subject; I shall spend this Discourse in shewing the Grounds of this Figure of Speech in my Text, and in giving a full Explication and Improvement of it in the following Manner.

- I. I shall offer some *Reasons why Sin, and the Principles of it, are represented by the Flesh.*
- II. I shall likewise propose the *Reasons why the Principles of Holiness are express'd by the Term Spirit.* And,

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III. Draw some useful Remarks from the whole.

First, Let me show why *Sin* is represented by *Flesh* so often in Scripture; and I give these Reasons for it:

1st, Because *fleshly, or sensible Objects*, are the chief Delight and Aim of Sinners. They pursue them, and they rejoice in them; and these lead away the Soul from God to Sin. 'Tis the great Business of Sinners to fulfil the Lusts of the *Flesh*, and make Provision for it. This is their Character in St. Paul's Writings; to gratify the Appetites of the Body, to provide for the Desires of their Animal Natures, Eating and Drinking, and Luxury, and Lusts of the *Flesh*, are the Cares of most unregenerate Men. The Lust of the Eye, and the Gayeties of Life, Gold and Silver, Pomp and Equipage, a fine House, a gay Appearance in the World, gawdy Clothing and glittering Ornaments of the Body, great Splendor in the Eyes of Men; these are the Idols, the Gods of Sinners; and they are the Temptations of the Saints too. The Things that relate to the *Flesh*, and the Enjoyments of this sensible and present Life, are the Objects of sinful Appetites, or of lawful Appetite in a sinful Degree; and therefore *Sin* is called *Flesh*.

Serm. IV. *Sin and Holiness.* 99

Idly, *Sin* is also called *Flesh*, because 'tis communicated and propagated to us by the Parents of our *Flesh*. It is by our *Flesh* that we are a-kin to *Adam*, the first great Sinner, and derive a corrupted Nature from him; from this original Taint we derive Iniquity, as a polluted Stream from an unclean Fountain; he is the Father of a sinful Posterity.

Our Spirits indeed are formed immediately by God, but being united to these Bodies that come from *Adam* by the Laws of Creation, we become the Children of *Adam*, and so are Partakers of his sinful Nature. How this is done, we may learn from other Discourses: 'tis enough here to say, that irregular Humours, and Motions, and Ferments, are transferred and propagated from the first Man, even from the same Blood of which are formed all the Nations of Men that dwell upon the Face of the Earth, Acts xvii. 26. These are transmitted down to us the wretched Posterity. In some Instances this is so evident, that all Men see and believe it. How often does the haughty, the peevish, or the cholerick Temper of the Parent, appear in the Son or the Daughter beyond all Contradiction? And often, when we see a drunken or a wanton Sinner, we cry, "He is the express Copy of his Father, he borrows his Vices as well as his Features, and seems

"to be his perfect Image." And tho' it is not so evident in all Men, that they borrow the Seeds of Iniquity from their Predecessors, yet there is Proof enough from the Word of God, that *we are conceived in Sin, and shapen in Iniquity, that Man who is born of a Woman is neither clean nor righteous. Who can bring a clean Thing out of an unclean?* 'Tis impossible; for *that which is born of the Flesh is Flesh*, Psal. li. 5. Job xv. 14. John iii. 6. Irregular Tendencies towards lawful Delights, and strong Propensities towards unlawful ones, a Neglect of God, and Aversion to all that is holy or heavenly, with an Inclination towards fleshly and sinful Objects, are convey'd to us all, even from our first Parents. Sinful *Adam* begat his Sons in his own Likeness, *Gen. v. 3.* and therefore *Sin* is described by *Flesh*, because it came from the Father of our *Flesh*.

III^{dly}, Another Reason why *Sin* is called *Flesh*, is because *the chief Springs of Sin lie most in our fleshly Natures*; all the while we continue here in this World, the Occasions of Sin lie much in our Body, in our Blood, in our natural Constitution, in this mortal Frame and Contexture; Fancy and Passion, in all their wild Irregularities, are much influenced by *Flesh and Blood*. Our bodily Senses, and our natural Appetites, are continually tempting us away from our Duty, and leading or enticing us to the Commission

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of Sin ; or, at least, immediately falling in with Temptation ; in so much, that Sin is said to *work in our Members*, Rom. vii. 5. to *reign in our mortal Body*, Rom. vi. 12. Sinful Actions are called the *Deeds of the Body*, Rom. viii. 13. Our Sins are called *our Members*, Col. iii. 5. *Mortify by the Spirit the Deeds of the Body*, saith the Apostle in one Place ; *Mortify your Members which are upon the Earth*, saith he in the other Place ; in both which he means the *Mortification of Sin*. He borrows Words from the human Body perpetually to describe *Sin*.

Here let it be noted, that we do not suppose that meer Flesh and Blood, distinct from the Soul, are capable of Sin, *properly speaking*, or can become guilty *in a proper Sense* ; for these are but meer Matter, and, separate from the Mind, cannot be under a Moral Law, any more than Brute Creatures : therefore we say, Sin is not *formally* in the Body of Man, but 'tis *occasionally* there ; because the Senses and Appetites, the Parts and Powers of the Body become very often an unhappy Occasion of Sin to the Soul ; and upon this Account the Apostle often describes *Sin* by the Word *Flesh*.

I proceed now to the *Second Thing* proposed, and that is to *show the Grounds of this metaphorical Use of the Word Spirit* : And there are the same Sorts of Reasons to be given

why this Word is used to represent *the Principles of Holiness*, as there are why *Flesh* should signify the *Principles of Sin*.

Ist, Because the *Objects and Aims of holy Souls are chiefly Spiritual*, (*viz.*) God and Heaven, invisible and eternal Things. Spiritual Objects are chief in their Esteem, most in their Thoughts and in their Desires, and have the first Place in their Designs and Pursuit: *As they that are after the Flesh, mind the Things of the Flesh; so they that are after the Spirit, mind the Things of the Spirit*; Rom. viii. 5.

A Saint, who is spiritually-minded, aims at those Things that are more a-kin to the Nature of a Spirit; he seeks the Knowledge of the Favour of God, who is the Supreme of Spirits, the infinite and self-sufficient Spirit, in whose Knowledge, and in whose Love, all intelligent Creatures find a full Sufficiency of Blessedness. He knows that all created Spirits who are holy and happy, are made so by Derivations from God's all-sufficient Holiness and Happiness; and therefore he applies himself with Zeal and Vigour to all those spiritual Exercises of Meditation, Faith and Prayer, wherein God reveals himself and his Mercy. The Knowledge of God and his Worship, of Christ and his Gospel, of the Holy Spirit and his Grace, is the chief Desire of a holy Soul. These are the Objects of the

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Pursuit of a spiritual Man; he has devoted himself to God and Things Divine; upon Account of which, a Man is denominated *holy*, and therefore *Holiness* is called *Spirit*.

The holy Man seeks the Welfare of his own Soul or Spirit before that of his Flesh; and while sinful Men lay out their whole Care and Contrivance about the Body, which must die, and grasp at the Things of this Life to make Provision for the Flesh, the Saint is most concern'd about his Soul, which is an immortal Spirit; he endeavours to rectify those Disorders of it, which Sin and the Flesh have introduced, and is ever diligent to make Provision for this Soul of his in the spiritual and unseen World, because it must have a Being there for ever. The holy Man is most solicitous that his Soul may be happy in an unknown *Hereafter*, while the Sinner seeks all his Happiness *Here*.

As the natural Man neglects the two chief Spirits he has any Concern with, that is, God and his own Soul; so fleshly Objects are his chief Desire: But the spiritual Man despises them all, in Comparison of the unseen Desirables of the spiritual World. The Men of this World take Pains to gratify their Senses, and indulge every fleshly Appetite among the Entertainments of this present evil World; but those who are holy, mortify their sinful

Passions, and set their Affections on Things above, Coloss. iii. 1, &c. They look and aim at Things that are unseen, that are eternal, while the Men of this World look only at the Things that are visible and temporal, 2 Cor. iv. ult. The sinful Many, or Multitude of Sinners, say, *Who will shew us any Good?* But they seek it only among Corn, Wine, and Oil, &c. The Saint prays to his God, *Lord, lift upon me the Light of thy Countenance*; and this shall put Gladness into my Heart, more than in the Time that their Corn and their Wine increaseth, Psal. iv. 6, 7. This is the first Reason why Holiness is described by the Word Spirit.

II^{dly}, Holiness is represented by the Spirit, because 'tis communicated to us by God the Father of our Spirits, even as Sin is conveyed down to us by the Parents of our Flesh. It is wrought in us by his blessed Spirit, whose Character it is to be holy. In the 8th of Rom. 13, 14. you see Holiness described as receiving its very Nature and Operation in us from the Spirit of God. *As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God*; and 'tis by the Spirit we mortify the Deeds of the Flesh, or Body, that so we may live. As they that are born of the Flesh are Flesh, so they that are born of the Spirit are Spirit, John iii. 6. This is the Language of our Lord Jesus Christ. They who have passed thro' no renewing and reforming Change of Heart

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Heart since their natural Birth, they are still in a natural sinful State, and the Principles of Sin are prevalent in them; but they who have been thus changed and renewed by the blessed Spirit of God, have a new and spiritual Nature, Principle, and Temper given to them, and are made holy. As by being born of Man, we become the Children of *Adam*, and gain a sinful Nature; so by being born of God, we become the Sons of God, and gain a Divine, a Holy Nature. We are born of God unto Holiness, as we are born of Flesh unto Sin. *1 John iii. 9. He that is born of God sinneth not; that is, Sin is not his Nature and Delight, nor his common and allowed Practice. We are regenerated and new-created by the Spirit of God; Titus iii. 5. Not by Works of Righteousness which we have done, but of his own Mercy hath he saved us by Regeneration, and Renewing of the Holy Ghost.*

III^{dly}, Another Reason why the Principle of Holiness is called *Spirit*, is because the chief Springs of Holiness, and of Opposition to Sin, are found in the Soul or spiritual Part, as the Springs and Occasions of Sin are chiefly seated in the Flesh.

This is true both in Saints and Sinners; for even in Sinners that have no renewing Grace, there is the Light of Nature, as well as the Knowledge of Scripture in our Nation; there are the Powers of Reason

and Conscience; and these judge concerning Vice and Virtue, that one is to be avoided, and the other practised; these inward intellectual Principles tell us, that Sin is offensive to God our Maker; that it exposes us to his Anger, and deserves terrible Punishment; and by the Exercise and Influence of natural Reason, added to the Knowledge of Scripture, and by the inward Stings, and sharp Reproofs of natural Conscience, many an evil Motion of the Flesh is suppress'd, many an inordinate Appetite and Passion subdued, and many a grosser Sin prevented. Now tho' all this is not properly called *Holiness*, till the Nature it self be renewed, the Love of Sin broken, and the Love of God wrought in the Heart; yet 'tis evident that those Principles which resist *Sin*, and have any distant Tendencies toward *Holiness*, lie chiefly in the Mind or *Spirit*.

This is yet more evident in a Saint, a Man that is regenerated and sanctify'd by Grace: for tho' in such a Person, the Body as well as the Spirit, may be in Part sanctified; that is, some of its irregular Appetites may be much weakened and subdued; yet still I cannot help supposing that the Spirit, or Soul, has a greater Share of Sanctification than the Flesh in this Life. 'Tis in the Soul that the Love of God is wrought by the Holy Spirit; 'tis the Soul that

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that repents of past Sins, and watches against Temptation; 'tis the Soul that believes the Gospel, and trusts in our Lord *Jesus Christ*; 'tis the Soul that by Faith takes a distant Prospect of Heaven and Hell, and converses with invisible Things beyond the Reach and Power of Flesh and Sense: 'Tis by the Powers of the Soul enlightned and renewed, that we come to see the Value and Excellency of Religion, and spiritual Things above temporal; and are inclined to chuse God for our only Happiness, and *Jesus Christ* as the Way to the Father. The Understanding and Will are Faculties of the Soul, and the Flesh has no Part in their Operations. The Soul of a Believer seems to be the more proper, immediate, and receptive Subject of the sanctifying Influences of the Spirit of God; and this will appear by consulting the Word of God, or the Experiences of Men.

The *Word of God* leads us very naturally into this Sentiment by its constant Language. The Apostle speaks indeed in one Place of being *sanctified wholly*, and our *whole Spirit, Soul and Body, being preserved blameless*, &c. 1 Thess. v. 23. But he much oftner expresses Sanctification by the *renewing of the Mind*, Rom. xii. 2. *Renewing of the Spirit of the Mind*, Eph. iv. 23. *Tho' the outward Man, or Body, perish, yet the inward Man, or Spirit, is renewed Day by Day*, 2 Cor. iv. 16.

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And the constant Language of the Scripture calling Sin *Flesh*, and Holiness *Spirit*, in the Saint, intimates that there is more Sin in the *Flesh*, and more Holiness in the *Spirit* of one that is sanctified. Thus we read in St. Paul's Discourse from the 16th ver. of *Romans* vii. to the 25th, where you find him all along distinguishing the *Flesh* and the *Mind*. By one of them he complains in a variety of Expressions, that he is led away to Sin, while the other of them approves and pursues after Holiness; and tho' the Words *Flesh* and *Spirit* are often used for the Principles of Sin and Holiness, yet it may be remarked, that he does not confine himself here to these Terms, but uses also the Words *Body*, *Members*, to represent Sin; *Inward Man*, and *Mind*, when he points to the *Springs of Holiness*; which would lead one very naturally to believe that there is more Sanctification in the *Mind* or Soul of a Believer, and more of the Occasions of Sin remaining in his *Body* or *Flesh*.

We may find this also in a great Measure from our own Experience: We are tempted to many more Sins by our various carnal Appetites and Senses, than by the meer Inclinations that belong to the *Mind*, which are purely intellectual. There are indeed the *Lasts* or sinful *Desires of the Mind*, as well as the *Lust of the Flesh*, Eph. ii. 3. There is a sinful Curiosity of the *Mind*; such

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such was Part of the Temptation of *Eve*, a Desire to *know Evil* as well as *Good*; there is spiritual Malice and Envy against God and his Saints; there is a spiritual Pride of intellectual Endowments, &c. and some of these are found too much in true Christians, as well as in Unbelievers: yet it must be acknowledged from constant Observation, that the Lusts of the Flesh are much more frequent, more numerous, and more powerful in the greatest Part of Men; and 'tis manifest that Acts of Religion and Holiness, and Exercises of Grace, begin more frequently in the inward Inclination of the *Spirit*, distinguish'd from the *Flesh*, as Sin more frequently begins in, and from the *Flesh* it self, either in the outward or inward Parts and Powers of it.

Surely if our Souls were sanctified by Divine Grace, but so much as many are in this World, and had no Flesh about them, they would not sin so much as they do. When we are engaged in the Exercise of Grace, or Performance of spiritual Duties, such as Meditation, Prayer, Delighting in God, Rejoicing in *Christ Jesus*, we should not be so soon weary of it, nor so immediately called away from it by the meer Vanity or Wandring of our Minds, if we had no fleshly Objects about us, no outward Senses, no inward Treasures of Fancy, no Appetites of the Body to start up
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and mingle with our Religion, to clogg us in our sacred Work, to make us grow weary under it, and draw us off from it. How often must a Saint say, "My Soul is sincerely set against every Sin, and I fear to offend him whom my Soul loveth." *With my Mind I serve the Law of God,* and I watch against every rising Iniquity; but my outward Senses, or the inward Ferments of fleshly Appetite or Passion, surprize me before I am aware, and defile my Soul. Sometimes my Spirit wrestles hard with Flesh and Blood; I summon all the Powers of Reason and Scripture, Conscience and Christianity; I make a firm Stand for a Season, and maintain a brave and painful Resistance; but the restless and perpetual Assaults of Fancy or Passion, at last over-power the feeble Spirit, and I sinfully submit and yield to the fretful or the luxurious Humours of the Body; and thus the brutal Powers overcome the Mind, and I am led away Captive to Sin. If I had not an Eye, I had not been drawn away to the Commission of this Folly; if I had not an Ear, I had not been tempted from God at such a Season; if I had not such Appetites or Senses in exercise, I had been secured from many a Snare; if I did not wear this Flesh about me, which is so fond and tender of it self, and

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“ fession of my Faith, nor so often polluted
“ my Soul with Sensualities, and made work
“ for bitter Repentance.”

Thus the Experience of Christians, and the Language of Scripture, concur in this Point, *That the Occasions of Sin evidently lie most in the Flesh ; and a Contradiction or Opposition to Sin, proceeds more from the Spirit.*

It is true indeed, and, must be confess'd, that the Soul being but in part sanctified, too often complies with these *Motions of Sin which work in our Members* ; and the Affections of the Soul it self, being not perfectly holy, are too easily induced to indulge the Desires and Passions of the Flesh ; and thereby Sin is committed, and Guilt contracted. *The Law, or Principle, of Sin in the Members, leads the Mind, too often, captive,* Rom. vii. 23. Thus the Soul is very culpable for want of perpetual Resistance, and becomes guilty before God, by every such inordinate Passion breaking forth, and by the Satisfaction of every such sinful raging Appetite : yet I must believe that the Soul of a Christian would not be guilty half so often, if the Lusts of the Body were not more active than the meer abstracted Lusts of the Mind

Mind are. *The Spirit lusteth against the Flesh, and the Flesh against the Spirit,* Gal. v. 17. That Part which is chiefly sanctified, and that which is chiefly unsanctified, strike against each other; and 'tis true in a literal Sense, as well as a figurative one, that a Saint with his Mind serves the Law of God, but too often with his Flesh the Law of Sin.

Thus I have given the chief Reasons why the Principles of Sin are represented in Scripture by Flesh, and the Springs of Holiness by the Spirit.

From this Consideration of Flesh and Spirit, of Holiness and Sin, which are set forth in the Word of God, and thus explained in the most free and intelligible Method that I am capable of, I would derive some Remarks for our Information and Practice.

Remark I. *We may hence derive a Rule of Judgment concerning our own State, and find whether we have any Principle of Holiness in our Hearts or no, or whether we are yet in the Flesh, and in a State of Sin.*

We may draw an easy Answer to these Questions, by making an inward Enquiry into our selves, according to the three Descriptions of Flesh and Spirit.

First, What are our chief Aims and Desires? Are they bent to gratify the Appetites of the
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Flesh, and set upon sensual Enjoyments? or do we we *seek and pursue Spiritual and Eternal Things*, as our most valuable and lovely Portion? What is our chief Treasure? Where are our Hearts and our Hopes? Are they wandering amongst Heaps of Gold and Silver, roving over fair and large Estates, entertaining themselves with gay Clothing, Honours, and Vanities? or are they pointing upwards, and directed towards God, the first and best of Beings; and fix'd on the Blessedness of the Spiritual World? Is our chief Concern to make Provision for the Flesh and this Life, or to secure an Inheritance for our Souls among the incorruptible Glories of the upper World? What is it that sits highest in our Esteem, and awakens our warmest Affections and brightest Joys? Is it God or the Creature, Heaven or Earth, Things fleshly or invisible? Let Conscience be faithful, and answer to such Enquiries.

Again, Let us ask our selves, Have we *nothing within us but what was deriv'd from Nature and the Flesh*? or do we find our selves enrich'd with Divine Graces *by the Influence of the Holy Spirit*? Are we the same sort of Creatures that we were born? or have we had a mighty Change wrought in us, so that we can find in our selves that we are *born again, born of the Spirit*? Have we new Love and new Hatred, new Designs and Pursuits,

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new Joys and Sorrows? or are the Affections of our Souls the same that we brought into the World with us, and engaged chiefly about the Affairs of this Body, and this temporal Life?

Let us enquire, in the third Place, Whether there be any *Opposition made by our Spirits against fleshly Passions and Appetites*? Let every one of us ask our Souls, What inward Conflict do I find in my self? Do I comply with all the sinful Tendencies of fleshly Nature, or do I maintain a continual Resistance? Is there a Combate, and, as it were, a Duel within me, when Temptations present themselves? or am I easily led away, and yield to Sin naturally, without any Reluctance? Do I find my Flesh and Spirit at war within me, when any sensual Allurements appear? or do I yield up all my Powers as Servants to Sin, and comply with the Lusts of the Flesh, with a hearty Delight? Am I like a dead Fish carried down with the Stream of my Appetites and Passions, and make no Pretences to oppose the vicious Current? If upon this Enquiry I find that the Flesh is Sovereign, and the Spirit never opposes it, I may pronounce my self then to be in the *Flesh*, in the most significant and complete Manner; then I have nothing but Flesh in me, and my Soul is, as it were, carnalized and deep immers'd in the fleshly Life.

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I confess there may be *some sort of Opposition* made to fleshly Lusts, where there is no renewed Nature, no saving Grace, no true Principle of Holiness, such as is described by the *Spirit* in my Text. Many a Youth resists his Inclination to a drinking Hour, or unclean Iniquities, by the meer Force of his Education, by the awful Regard he has to his Parents, by a Fear of Injury to his Health, or of publick Shame or Scandal. Many a wicked Man refuses to comply with his corrupt Appetites, because he cannot bear the Anguish of his own Conscience, and the sharp Reproaches of his Reason and better Judgment. And many a guilty Passion is restrain'd and suppress'd, from a natural Fear of the Justice of God and an everlasting Hell, without any inward Principle of real Piety.

'Tis not *every Resistance* therefore that we make and maintain against Sin, can be a sufficient Evidence that we are new Creatures, unless we can say with *St. Paul*, Rom. vii. 22. *I delight in the Law of God after the inward Man*; that my Soul not only approves, but takes Pleasure in Holiness; that Sin is the Object of my utter Hatred, as well as my present Resistance; and that not only as it promotes my own Ruin, but as it brings Dishonour to God: that my very Heart and Soul are set for God and Religion, and 'tis a Grief and daily Burden

den to me, that there should be any such Thing as a Law in my Members warring against the Law of my Mind; which makes the true Christian cry out often, with Bitterness of Soul, *O wretched Man that I am! who shall deliver me from the Body of this Death?* Rom. vii. 24.

Yet still it remains an uncontrollable Truth, That where is no Resistance to the Flesh, and the Lusts thereof, there Persons are not only in a State of Sin, but in the strongest Bonds of Iniquity: they have brutify'd their human Natures, and have made themselves like the Beasts that perish; such was the Character of the *Ephesian Gentiles* when the Gospel came first amongst them; they were alienated from the Life of God, and being past feeling, gave themselves up to work all Uncleanness with Greediness, Eph. ii. 18, 19.

Remark II. There may be some Spirit in a Person where there is much Flesh; some Holiness where there is much Sin. For as none but Saints in Heaven are all Spirit, and as the Unregenerate are all Flesh; so the Saints here upon Earth, are some Flesh and some Spirit, because they are sanctify'd but in Part; they are in their Way towards Perfection, but they are not perfect: The Spirit and the Flesh conflict in them, so that they cannot do the Things which they would. As they cannot serve God and practise Holiness

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with such Constancy and Zeal as they desire, because of the lusting of the Flesh; so neither can they sink so far into Sin, nor indulge evil Courses so far as the Flesh would lead them, if they had no Strivings of the Spirit to resist it, no Principles of Regeneration or Holiness.

They are led away indeed many Times by sensual and fleshly Allurements, but the chief Objects of their Pursuit are spiritual and heavenly; they have too many of the same vain Affections, and sinful Desires, that were *born of the Flesh*, remaining in them; but they have also new Thoughts and Hopes, new Inclinations and Appetites towards divine Things, which could not be derived but from Heaven, and prove them to be *born of the Spirit*.

As unreasonable as it is therefore for any sincere Christians to say, they are *complete in Holiness*, or pretend to Perfection in this Life, because they find a Work of Grace in them; so it is equally unreasonable for them to charge themselves with being *altogether carnal and unregenerate*, because they find some of the Lusts of the Flesh warring in them. I would say, therefore, with Compassion to such humble and doubting Souls, While you are Inhabitants in Flesh, and your Sanctification is imperfect, you will not have perfect Peace: there will ever be some Enemies within, for you

to conflict with; and this inward War, this Battle with Flesh and Blood, with Self and Sin, will by no Means prove that ye are utterly un sanctified: No, it will rather give you some Reasons to hope that there may be a Principle of Holiness wrought in you, because you find a Resistance against the Flesh, especially if you experience also a Zeal and Hatred against every rising Iniquity. The most holy Soul in this Life, can never prevent all the Motions of irregular Appetites; and the best of Christians have much ado to curb and suppress some sinful Affections which spring from this mortal Body. The chiefest of Saints had Reason to complain, that he was too often led *Captive by the Law of Sin in his Members*; Rom. vii.

'Tis true indeed, if we were completely sanctified, if our Spirits were entirely holy, they would constantly and effectually resist all evil Motions and Appetites of the Flesh, so that they should not bring forth the Fruits of Iniquity and Guilt: but when this Resistance is not always effectual, yet if it be constant and sincere, and flow from a real Hatred of Sin, there the Heart is renewed, and the spiritual Life begun. Let trembling Christians therefore be encouraged, tho' they may find many vexing Temptations of the Flesh, and disquieting Passions sometimes stirring within them; let them not cast away their Hope, but let them

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ther rejoice in the Promises of the Covenant, and go on daily to *cleanse themselves*, by the Aids of divine Grace, *from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, and to perfect Holiness in the Fear of God*, 2 Cor. vii. 1.

Remark III. *What bold and impious Folly are those guilty of, who give a Loose to all the Appetites and Lusts of the Flesh, under a pretence that 'tis their Temper and Constitution leads them to it; that 'tis their Nature inclines them to riot in all Luxury and Wantonness; and that they do but follow the Leadings of Nature? I would reason a little with Persons of such a profligate Character, if they have not renounc'd Reason as well as Religion.*

1st, Consider, Sinners, whether you are not under a great Mistake, while you say, that you obey all the Dictates of Nature when you rush on to fleshly Iniquities. *Have you no natural Conscience within you that forbids these vile Practices? Has it not given you many a Check already, and many an inward Reproach? Have you no Reason that tells you that there is a God, and a Judgment, and a terrible Account one Day to be given of the Guilt and Madness which you now indulge? 'Tis but one part of your Nature then, and that the meanest and the vilest too, whose Dictates you obey, when you give your selves up to all Intemperance. The very Heathens have* such

such a Conscience in them, such a *Law written in their Hearts*, to forbid, and to condemn the grosser Iniquities, *Rom. ii. 15.* and such an inward Monitor belongs to your Nature too, unless you have entirely subdued and enslaved your Spirits, which are the best Part of your Natures, to the Tyranny of your Flesh; unless you have buried your Reason in brutal Appetite, and *sear'd your Conscience as with an hot Iron*, that they may neither feel nor speak.

2dly, You say, 'tis Nature you obey while you follow after fleshly Lusts; but is it not Nature deprav'd and spoil'd? Can you think 'tis the pure, the original, and uncorrupted Nature of Man to follow all the Appetites of Flesh and Blood, and live upon a Level with the Brutes that perish? Can you imagine that your Spirit and Reason, and all the glorious Powers of your intellectual Nature in their first Perfection, were made to be thus employ'd as Lackeys to the Body, and meer Purveyors for the Flesh? Is it not a Sign your Nature is fallen from its original State, while these meaner Powers of Sense and Passion have so mighty and sovereign an Influence? and is it not rather the Dictate of Reason, and Nature, and true Self-Love, that you should seek the Recovery of your original Excellencies, and that you should use all Methods to stop and heal the Diseases of your

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But 3dly, Suppose it were the Inclination of animal Nature in its original Frame, to be intemperate, proud, angry, impatient, and luxurious; and suppose all the present evil Appetites and Passions of the Flesh, were the Attendants of Man in his first Estate; yet has not God your Creator and Governor, a Right to place you in a State of Tryal, in order to future Rewards and Punishments? And may he not forbid your Spirit to comply with these Inclinations of Nature and the Flesh, as a Test of your Obedience to God your Maker? Is it not proper there should be some Difficulties to conquer in such a probationary State? And if the God who made you, has actually appointed the Matter of your Probation or Tryal, to be a Conflict of the Spirit with Flesh and Blood, had he not a Right to make this Appointment? And does not your own Reason and Conscience tell you that you deserve his Anger and severe Punishment, if you abandon your self to all the wild Motions and Extravagancies of bodily Appetite, which he requires you to resist and subdue?

Bethink your selves, O Sinners, how you will answer it to God another Day; that when he has given you a Soul, a Spirit, a Conscience to fight against fleshly Lusts, you should nourish and indulge them hourly?

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When he has offer'd his Grace to change your corrupt Natures, and has sent his only Son, and his eternal Spirit, to purchase Pardon for past Sins, and to make new Creatures of you; when he has taught you your Duty, and offers divine Aids to fulfil it; when he both entreats you as a Friend, and commands you as a God, to resist these Lusts of the Flesh effectually, and be forever holy and happy; that you should neglect the Laws and the Mercies of a great and condescending God, and still run riot in the Pursuit of forbidden Passions and Pleasures? *Can your Hearts endure, or your Hands be strong in the Day* that the God of Vengeance shall appear in flaming Fire, to make Enquiry into such Rebellion? Can you be so stupid as to hope that the poor Pretences of Flesh and Nature, will skreen you from just and Almighty Indignation?

Awake, awake, O mistaken Creatures, and let the *Man within you* resume its Place, and Reason and Conscience do their Office. Awake from this vain and dangerous Dream, this fatal Security, and wilful Blindness. Rouze the Powers of your Souls to arm, and fight in Opposition to the sinful Flesh; and bestir your selves e'er the Time of Tryal be ended, and the decisive Sentence of an offended God, doom you to Miseries that have no End.

Remark IV. In this Description of the Principles of Sin and Holiness, as seated in our Flesh, or in our Spirit, we may see the *Nature of the Christian Warfare*; that much of it consists in a *Fight of the Spirit with Flesh and Blood*. Little do some Christians consider how much of Religion lies in watching over their Appetites and Senses, and setting a Guard upon the sinful Tendencies of the Flesh; little do they think how much of their Piety and their holy Peace depends, on keeping down this Flesh, and subduing it to the best Service of the Soul.

There may be some Persons, who under Pretence of serving God in the Spirit, and the more exalted and refined Notions and Practices of Christianity, give a Loose to the Flesh, in eating and drinking, and dressing, and all the Luxuries of Life. But can these Christians imagine, that when they pamper and indulge that wherein Sin is chiefly seated, their Spirits should long maintain their Purity and Heavenly-mindedness? St. Paul was of another Mind, 1 Cor. ix. 27. *I keep under my Body*, says he; *I fight with my Flesh which is my great Enemy*; ὑποπιάζω καὶ δὲ λαγχυνῶ, *I subdue it, and beat it down, as with heavy Blows, I keep it under as a Slave, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a Cast-away*; lest, when I have preached to others the Doctrine of mortifying the Flesh, and of walking according to the Spirit, I should in-

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dulge such fleshly Sins as would prove my Eternal Ruin.

Let not any Man imagine, that I am here teaching the *Romish* Penances, and *Monkish* Severities: there is no Necessity of Sackcloth and Beggary, Scourging and Starving, in order to keep the Body fit for the Duties of Religion. Surely there is a *Medium* between the Self-indulgence of some *lazy and carnal Christians*, and the superstitious Forms of mortifying the Flesh, practised in the *Popish Church*; and if, under a Pretence of sublime Spirituality, we let the fleshly Appetites get the Mastery of us, the Prosperity, and even the Safety of the Soul, will be in extreme Hazard; for St. Peter and St. Paul agree well in this Doctrine, That *fleshly Lusts war against the Soul*; 1 Pet. ii. 11.

I confess the Apostle tells the *Ephesians* chap. vi. v. 12. *We wrestle not against Flesh and Blood, &c.* But 'tis plain he means no more, than that *Flesh and Blood* are not our only Enemies, but that we wrestle also with *Principalities and Powers, and spiritual Wickedness*, i. e. with Satan and the Powers of Darknes. Yet we must remember that the Powers of Darknes chiefly attack our Spirits by Means of our Flesh. I cannot believe they would have so much Advantage over our Souls as they have, if our Souls were released from *Flesh and Blood*. Satan has a Chamber in the Imagination, Fancy is his Shop where

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forge sinful Thoughts ; and he is very busy at this mischievous Work, especially when the Powers of Nature labour under any Disease, and such as affects the Head and the Nerves : he seizes the unhappy Opportunity, and gives greater Disturbances to the Mind, by awakening the Images of the Brain in an irregular Manner, and stimulating and urging onwards the too unruly Passions. This crafty Adversary is very ready to *fish*, as we say, in troubled Waters, where the Humours of the Body are out of Order. Thus he is wise to make his Advantage of all our Weaknesses, and to gain some Interest in them, to execute his hellish Designs thereby. 2 Cor. xii. 7. *A Messenger of Satan, and a Thorn in the Flesh*, were both together troublesome to St. Paul ; whether they became two distinct Enemies, or one strengthened by the Influence of the other, is hard to determine ; but thus much seems to be intimated, that some troublesome Disorder in the Flesh, gave a great Occasion to *Satan* to buffet *Paul* more severely, and do him more Mischief.

It is hard wrestling for a poor sanctified Soul, with so violent and strong a Yoke-Fellow as our Flesh. The Powers of the Flesh twine about our feeble Spirit, and often pull it to the Ground, and get the Mastery of it. The Just Man may *fall down seven Times, and rise again* ; but the Wicked fall into Mischief, and attempt not to rise, Prov. xxiv.

16. We are tied to the *Flesh* while we are here, and it is the biggest, and the hardest Part of our State of Tryal, to be constantly tied to such *Flesh* as ours is. All the Adversaries we have besides, are not equal to the Adversary that dwells with us, nor is all their Power equal to the Power of our *Flesh* and Blood, with its restless Urgencies, leading us away from God to Sin. There is so close a Union between *Flesh* and Spirit, in this State, that we carry our Prison about us, even the *Flesh* in which we inhabit: we drag our Chains about with us; we are tied down to our Senses; we are too nearly allied to the Passions and Appetites of this Animal in which the Soul dwells, and these the Soul cannot master and subdue entirely: however let us wrestle with *Flesh and Blood*, as well as with the tempting *World*, and the Malice of *Satan*; let us bestir our selves, and *fight the good Fight of Faith*, for the Crown is worth the Labour of the Conquest.

Yet there is another *Difficulty* attends this Part of our spiritual Warfare, (*viz.*) *This is a Combate to which the Captain of our Salvation did not lead us on in Person, and in which Christ never went before us.* 'Tis a Labour of Piety in which our blessed Saviour was not our Pattern; nor could he be, for he had no Principle of Sin in his Soul, nor any sinful Motion in all his sensitive Powers. His *Flesh* it self, in a literal Sense, was

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of the Spirit, and he was all Spirit, all Holy. The Holy Ghost overshadowed the blessed Virgin; and that holy Thing that was born of Mary, was sanctified in its Original, and united to the Eternal Son of God, Luke i. 35. Never had he one disorderly Passion; never one vicious Appetite, no criminal Wish, no guilty Inclination; he knew no excessive Tendencies towards a lawful Object, nor did he feel any inward Propensity toward an unlawful one. He took Part of Flesh and Blood, indeed, because the Children were Partakers of it: In all Things was he made like to his Brethren, but without Sin, and tempted in all Points as we are, except this inward and native Temptation; Heb. ii. 14, 17. & iv. 15. This Part of our Warfare, therefore, we have no perfect Pattern for; the Leader of the holy Army never went through these special and sore Conflicts, in which our Spirits are daily engaged, even the War with corrupt Nature and sinful Flesh: yet he pities and sympathizes with us; for, as God, he knows our whole Frame perfectly; and he knows, as Man, what our Flesh is, and what its sinful Appetites are, so far as his holy Nature will admit of this Sympathy. In such a Case as this, which he never experienced, yet he supplies us with such Grace as is effectually suited to relieve these Agonies; and the kind Angel of the Covenant will be at our

Right Hand, to strengthen the sincere Combatants, that they be not overcome.

Remark V. *How much do our Fellow-Christians deserve our Pity, that labour under great Difficulties, and great Darknes, through the perverse Humours of their Flesh? through the untoward Constitutions of their Nature, through the peevish, or proud, or malicious, or passionate Tempers of their mortal Body?*

Some have a more wrathful, some a more wanton Mixture of Blood and natural Spirits; others again are more melancholy in their Constitution, are ready to overwhelm themselves with Despair and unbelieving Sorrows; they go on fighting and mourning all the Day long, with many a violent Contest, many a Groan and Struggle, many a sharp Combate, and perhaps with many a Wound too. They are often upon their Knees for Strength to subdue this ever present Enemy *the Flesh*, and can gain but little Advantage; they are fighting from Day to Day, and their Sins are so powerful still, that they think they never get nearer to the Conquest: they labour and toil, pray and endeavour to obtain Divine Assistance, and yet are too often overcome. This is the Case of many a Christian who hath some strong Corruption mingled with his Constitution. Let us pity such, and pray for them too, and not

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be hasty in censuring their Character and their State: Bless God if your Constitution be of a happier Mould, and if your Tryals are not so great, and your Temptations so heavy as theirs.

But you will say, "They sin often, and fall very foully, and dishonour Religion more than you." It may be so; but it may be they fight harder than you do, and labour with more Assiduity, and exercise more Grace than ever you did, and yet are more frequently overcome by Sin: so strong is the constitutional Iniquity in some Natures, more than it is in others. Therefore, while you condemn the Sin, let not the poor striving mourning Sinner be censured heavily as to his Character, or as to his State. It was said of a very great Man of God heretofore, that he had Grace enough for ten Men, but not half enough for himself, because his natural Constitution was so very violent and passionate.

When thou seeest therefore a Christian often in Sorrow, confessing his Follies, and continually humbled under a sense of the Levity of his Spirit, or the Vanity of his natural Temper; when he grieves, that in such and such a Season, he has indulged unlawful Aims, and comply'd too far with the Vices of Company; when thou observest his Spirit vexed and pained inwardly, that he has indulged any criminal Ap-
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petite or Passion beyond what has been visible in thy own Conduct; do not pride thy self in thy own Purity, nor disdain thy mourning Brother, but say within thy self, "Perhaps he has watched and laboured more than I have done, and yet his own Iniquity was too strong for him." Think with thy self that he was wrestling with a *Giant*, and fought hard and was overcome; but thy own Combate was but as it were with a *Dwarf* or a *Child*, with some feeblér Vice that had less Root in thy Constitution; and therefore tho' thou hast labour'd less, yet thou hast gain'd the Victory. And to encourage such mourning Christians, let me add, That in the future State, 'tis probable, the Saints shall be rewarded, not so much according to their actual Success and Victory, as according to the Toil and Labour of the Combate.

Yet take this *Caution* by the Way too: Such Persons should not think themselves innocent, because they fight harder against Sin than others do; let them not think all Warnings useless, nor be angry with the gentle Admonitions of their Friends, as tho' they were hard Censures: for such Christians have more need of Warning than others, because they are more in Danger. They ought to be crying out on themselves continually, *O wretched Creature! who shall deliver me?* They should beg Reproofs, and say,

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Let the Righteous smite me, it shall be a Kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent Oil that shall not break my Head; Rom. vii.

24. *Psal. cxli. 5. Let my Brethren watch over me, for I find I am not sufficient to be my own Keeper; and let them have Compassion on me, plucking me out of the Fire, for I hate, as well as they, the Garment spotted with the Flesh, Jude ver. 23.*

Thus the Flesh must be brought under by constant Watchfulness, Prayer, and Resistance, else we cannot maintain Holiness and Peace. Take heed therefore, O feeble and tempted Christian, while thou art by Prayer engaging the heavenly Alliance on thy side, that thou let not thy own Weapons drop, but maintain the War. The Fight is to last but threescore Years and ten; if thou overcome, there is the Crown of Life ready for thee, which Jesus the Judge shall bestow on all the Conquerors.

Remark VI. *How should we rejoice in Hope of that Hour that shall release us from this sinful Flesh; when we shall serve God in Spirit without a Clog, without a Tempter! O with what a Relish of sacred Pleasure should a Saint read those Words, in 2. Cor. v. 8. Absent from the Body, and present with the Lord? Absent from this Traytor, this vexing Enemy, that we constantly carry about with us! Absent from the Clog and Chain of this sinful Flesh, the Prison wherein we*
are

are kept in Darknes, and are confined from God! *Absent* from these Eyes that have drawn our Souls afar from God by various Temptations! and *Absent* from these Ears by which we have been allured to Transgression and defiling Iniquities! *Absent* from those Lusts and Passions, from that Fear and that Hope, that Pleasure and that Pain, that Love, that Desire, and Anger, which are all carnal, and seated in the fleshly Nature, and become the Spring and Occasion of so much Sin and Mischief to our Souls in this State. *Absent from the Body, and present with the Lord*: Methinks there is a Heaven contain'd in the first Part of these Words, *Absent from the Body*; and a double Happiness in the last, *Present with the Lord*: *Present* with him who hath saved our Spirits thro' all the Days of our Christian Conflict, and hath given us the final Victory: *Present* with that God, who shall eternally influence us to all Holiness, who shall for ever shine upon us with his own Beams, and make us conformable to his own holy Image: *Present* with that Lord and Saviour, from whom it shall not be in the Power of all Creatures to divert or draw us aside.

It is by our Flesh in this World that we are a-kin to so many Temptations, a-kin to all the Objects that stand around us, to tempt us from our God; and we are

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ready to cry out, "O the blessed Angels
"that were never a-kin to Flesh! O those
"blessed Spirits, who move swift as
"Flames to execute the Will of their
"God, without the Incumbrance of Flesh,
"without being allured by that most
"powerful and successful Tempter! Hap-
"py Beings! They know not our Toils;
"they feel them not; they are all Spirit;
"they are all holy! O the blessed Saints in
"Glory, that are released from their Flesh,
"which once they had so many, and so
"fore Combates with! Their Flesh, which
"heretofore prisoned them, and pained
"them, and drew them often away from
"God, contrary to that heavenly Bias that
"was put upon their Souls by God the San-
"ctifier!"

But we rejoice in Hope that our Turn
shall come too. There is a Day of Deli-
verance from this sinful Flesh provided for
us. *All our Times are in the Hand of God;*
and the best Time, is the Time of our Re-
lease from this sinful Companion. Let our
Faith say, "I read in the Promises that
"this same Happiness belongs to me,
"which the Saints above are now possessed
"of: It is coming, it is coming as fast as
"Time and the Heavens can move, as fast
"as Days and Hours can remove out of the
"Way." Then we shall have no Flesh for
the World to lodge one Temptation in, nor
for

for *Satan* to make use of as an Engine of his Malice, to batter the Constancy and Duty of our Souls; then we shall be freed from all those Methods of Injury to our Spirits, which we receive now by Means of the Flesh.

Thus at the Day of our Death is derived a glorious Liberty, and thence we date our Joys; but our Joys rise high indeed, if our Faith can but look a little farther, and take a Prospect of that Day, when our Flesh shall be raised in perfect Holiness, and our Spirits compleatly holy, shall be rejoined to it; then it shall be no more true, that *Flesh and Spirit* *lust against each other, and these two are contrary*; for Flesh and Spirit shall both draw one Way, both lead us towards our Divine Original, and the first Father of our Beings. Then *the Law in our Members, and the Law in our Minds*, shall concur together to influence us to perfect Holiness; then, when our Spirits shall be like God, the first and best of Spirits; and when our Flesh shall be like the Flesh of the Son of God, that great Pattern of a glorified Body.

And this Day will surely come, for our Redeemer with his Body is glorified in Heaven, and he sits there as a Pattern of our Bodies to be glorified, and a Pledge to assure us of it too. O come the Day when he shall change these Bodies of our Vileness into the Form of the Body of his Glory! and

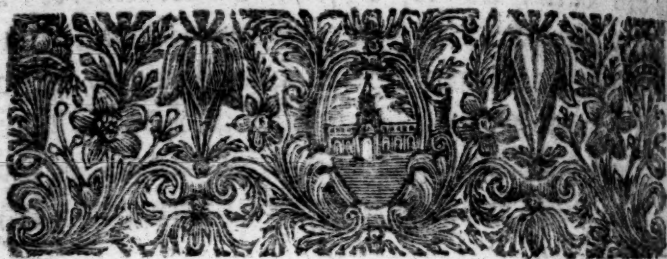
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he can easily do it, by that Power whereby he can subdue all Things to himself. Then shall our Flesh and our Spirit join sweetly together, and each of them fulfil and enjoy their Part, in the Business and Blessedness provided for them in Regions of unknown Pleasure. *Amen.*



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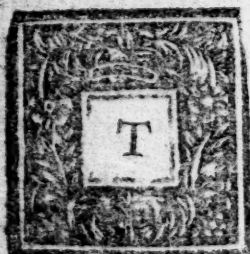
SERMON V.

The Soul drawing near to God in Prayer.

JOB xxiii. 3, 4.

*O that I knew where I might find him;
that I might come even to his Seat; I
would order my Cause before him, &c.*

The First Part.



HIS Book of *Job* might, perhaps, be the first and earliest Part of all the written Word of God; for learned Men, upon good Ground, suppose that this History was elder than the Days of *Moses*: and yet it hath many a sweet Lesson of experimental Religion in it.

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to teach the Disciples of Christ; we may learn many Duties and Comforts from it in our Day, *upon whom the Ends of the World are come.* The Style of it in some Parts is so magnificent and solemn, in others so tender and affectionate, that we must feel something of devout Passion when we read this History, if our Hearts are but in a serious Frame, and if our Temper or Circumstances of Mind or Body have any Thing a-kin to the Grief or Piety of this good Man.

Job had now heard long Stories of Accusation from his Friends, while he was bowed down, and groaning under the heavy Providences of God; they *persecuted him whom God had smitten*, and poured in fresh Sorrows upon all his Wounds. "I'll turn
"aside, *saith he*, from Man, for *miserable*
"Comforters are ye all; and I will address
"my self to God, even the God that smites
"me. *O that I knew where I might find him!*"

The Stroke of the Father doth not make the Child fly from him, but come nearer, and bow himself before his best Friend; this is the filial Temper of the Children of God.

"My Complaint is bitter, *saith Job*, ver. 2.
"because of my Sorrows from the Hand
"of God, and from the Accusations and
"Reproaches of my Friends; you may
"think I am too lavish in my Complaint-
"ings

"ings and my continual Cries, but I feel
 "more than I complain of." And there-
 fore *Job* is set up as a Pattern of Patience;
 for he could say, *My Stroke is heavier than my*
Groaning.

There are some of the Children of God
 who give themselves up to a perpetual Ha-
 bit of Complaints and Groans, though no
 Tryal has befallen them *but what is common*
to Men; they make all around them sensi-
 ble of every lesser Pain they feel, and be-
 ing always uneasy in themselves, they take
 the kindest and gentlest Admonition for an
 Accusation; and while they imagine them-
 selves in the Case of *Job*, they resent highly
 every real or suspected Injury: in short,
 they make a great Part of their own Sor-
 rows themselves, and then they cry out
 and complain; and among their dismal
 Complaining, they often, without Reason,
 assume the Words of *Job* as their own, and
 say, *My Stroke is heavier than my Groaning.*
 In some Persons this is the Temper of their
 Natures, and in others a meer Distemper
 of the Body; but both ought to watch
 against it, and resist it, because it appears
 so much like sinful Impatience and Fret-
 fulness, that it cannot be indulged without
 Sin.

There are others, whose real Afflictions
 are dreadful indeed, and uncommon, who
 seem to tire all their Friends with their
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Complaints too; but (it may be) if we knew all their Variety of Sorrows, and could take an intimate View of every outward and inward Wound, we should acknowledge their *Stroke was heavier than their Groaning*; and especially when God is in such a Measure absent from them too, that they are at a loss (as *Job* was) how they should come at him, or converse with their heavenly Father: then their Souls break out into vehement Desires, *O that I knew where I might find him!*

A Child of God, who is wont to maintain a constant and humble Correspondence with Heaven, does often receive such sensible Influences of Instruction and Comfort from the Throne of Grace, that he is led on sweetly in the Path of daily Duty, by the guiding Providences of God, and by the secret Directions of his Holy Spirit. He finds Divine Pleasure in his Morning Addresses to the Mercy-Seat, and returns to the Throne in the Evening with Joy in his Heart, and Praise upon his Tongue. He has something to do with the great God, in a way of humble Devotion, in all his important Concerns: but if God retire and withdraw from him, he feels and bemoans the Divine Absence, and his Heart meditates Grief and Complaints; and when at the same Time he is press'd with other Burdens too, he breathes after God with

a sacred Impatience, and longs to know where he may find him : then says the Soul, O if I could but come near to the Seat of God in my Addresses to him, I would order my Cause before him, and fill my Mouth with Arguments. This brings me to the Doctrine, which shall be the Subject of my Discourse.

Observation. *When a Christian gets near the Seat of God in Prayer, he tells him all his Sorrows, and pleads with him for Relief.*

In discoursing on this Doctrine I shall consider four Things.

- I. How may we know when a Soul gets near to God in Prayer ; or, what it is to get near the Seat of God.
- II. What are the particular Subjects of holy Converse between God and the Soul.
- III. Why such a Soul tells God all his Sorrows.
- IV. How he pleads with God for Relief.

First, *How may we know when a Soul gets near the Seat of God in Prayer.*

I answer, There will be some or all these Attendants of Nearness to God.

1st, There will be an inward Sense of the several Glories of God, and suitable Exercises of Grace in the Soul. For when we get near to God, we see him, we are in his Presence ;

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fence; he is then (as it were) before the Eyes of the Soul, even as the Soul is at all Times before the Eyes of God. There will be something of such a spiritual Sense of the Presence of God, as we shall have when our Souls are dismissed from the Prison of this Flesh, and see him Face to Face, tho' in a far less Degree: 'tis something that resembles the future Vision of God in the blessed World of Spirits; and those Souls who have had much Intimacy with God in Prayer, will tell you that they know in some measure what *Heaven* is. The Soul, when it gets near to God, even to his Seat, beholds several of his Glories displayed there; for 'tis a *Seat of Majesty*, a *Seat of Judgment*, and a *Seat of Mercy*. Under these three Characters is the *Seat of God* distinguished in Scripture; and because this Word is part of my Text, I shall therefore a little enlarge upon these Heads.

When the Soul gets near to God, it sees him,

(1.) *As upon a Seat of Majesty.* There he appears to the Soul in the first Notion of his Divinity or Godhead, as *Self-sufficient*, and the first of Beings: he appears there as the infinite Ocean, the unmeasurable Mountain of Being, and Perfection, and Blessedness; and the Soul, in a due Exercise of Grace, shrinks, as it were, into nothing

nothing before him, as a Drop, or a Dust, a meer Atom of Being. The Soul is in its own Eyes at that Time, what it is always in the Eyes of God, as *nothing, and less than nothing, and Vanity.*

He appears then in the Glory of his *All-sufficiency*, as an Almighty Creator, giving Birth, and Life, and Being, to all Things; and the Soul, in a due Exercise of Grace, stands before him as a dependent Creature, receiving all its Powers and Being from him, supported every Moment by him, and ready to sink into utter Nothing, if God withdraw that Support. Such is God, and such is the Soul, when the Soul draws near to God in Worship.

He appears again upon his *Seat of Majesty* as a Sovereign, in the Glory of his Infinite *Supremacy*, and the Soul sees him as the Supreme of Beings, owns his just Sovereignty, and subjects it self afresh and for ever to his high Dominion. O, with what deep Humility and Self-abasement doth the Saint, considered meerly as a Creature, cast himself down at the Foot of God, when he comes near to the *Seat of his Majesty*! "Behold (saith Abraham) I now have taken upon me to speak unto thee, I who am but Dust and Ashes;" Gen. xviii. 27. This is the Language of a Saint when got near to the Seat of the Majesty of God. "Before I had seen thee as such a Sovereign, I

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"was restive and stubborn: in Times past
"I quarrelled with God because of diffi-
"cult Duties imposed upon me, and be-
"cause of the difficult Dispensations I was
"made to pass through; but now I behold
"God so infinitely my Superior, that I
"can quarrel no more with any Duty, or
"any Difficulty; I submit to all his Will:
"whatsoever he will have me be, that I
"am; whatsoever he bids me do, that I
"do; for 'tis fit he should be a Sovereign,
"and I should be a Subject. I give my
"self to him afresh, and for ever, that he
"may dispose of me according to his own
"Will, and for his own Glory: I would
"be more regardless of my self, and more
"regardful of my God; 'tis fit he should
"be the ultimate End of all that I can be,
"and all I can do, for he is my Sove-
"reign."

Again, When a Soul is near to God,
God appears in the Glory of his *Holiness*;
for the *Seat of his Majesty* is called the
Throne of his Holiness, Psal. xlvii. 8. And
then the *Heavens are not clean in his sight*:
and the Soul cries out with those worship-
ping Seraphims, *Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord*
of Hosts; the whole *Earth is full of his Glory*:
and joins with *Isaiah*, the worshipping Saint,
in that humble Language, *Wo is me, for I*
am a Man of unclean Lips, &c. You see the
Character of a Saint getting near to God,
and

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and standing before the Seat of his Majesty, *Isaiah* vi 3, 4. where the Angels and the Prophet worship together with the deepest Humility. "I have heard of thy Holiness before, (says the Soul) and I have heard before of thy Glory afar off; but now mine Eyes see it, and I abhor myself in Dust and Ashes: *Job* xlii. 6.

(2.) His Seat is to be considered as a Seat of Judgment; for God is not only a King, but a Judge: and *Job* has, without doubt, a reference to this in my Text, because the Language which he uses, seems suited to a Throne of Judicature, a Throne of Justice. If I could get near his Seat, I would order my Cause before him, I would plead with him. The Soul that gets near to God, sees him sitting upon a Seat of Judgment, as an Omniscient God: he looks like the Judge of all the Earth, and his Eyes are like a Flame of Fire to search our Souls to the Centre, and to know our most hidden Thoughts: the Soul then attempts no more to conceal it self, no more to hide its Guilt or its Wretchedness; for it beholds the Eyes of God that see through all Things, that search into the deepest Hypocrisy, and it is impossible that any Thing should be concealed from him. "Behold I am before that God, (says the Soul) before whom nothing can be hid; before whom all Things are naked and open; and 'tis with

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"him that I have to do ; therefore I open my
"Heart before him, and I spread open all
"my inward Powers, for he sees and knows
"them all, should I attempt to conceal
"them."

"I behold him in his infinite and in-
"flexible *Justice*, as well as in his all-seeing
"Knowledge ; and I cry out, *If thou, O*
"*Lord, shouldst mark Iniquity, O Lord, who*
"*should stand ?*" This is the Language of
the holiest Saint, getting near to God here
on Earth, as seated upon a *Seat of Judg-*
ment.

The Soul beholds him also as girt with re-
solute's Power to execute his own Laws ; and
the Thunder of his Power, says *Job, who can*
understand ? He has Armies of Angels, Mi-
nisters of Fire, Attendants on his Tribunal,
and swift to execute the Sentence of his
Mouth. The Saint sees him thus invested,
surrounded, and adores and fears before
him.

The Soul beholds him with Rewards in
one Hand, and Punishments in the other ;
Infinite Rewards, and Infinite Punishment ;
distributing to the unseen World perpetual
Blessedness, and perpetual Pains. "I be-
"hold him arrayed in this Glory, (saith the
"Saint) I expect my Sentence from his
"Lips, from whence eternal Blessings, and
eternal Curses, are dispensed to all the
Regions of Heaven and Hell ; but *he will*

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“not plead against me with his great Power; the
“Sentence that comes forth from his Mouth, I
“trust, shall be on my Side.”

(3.) He appears as sitting upon a Throne of Grace. The Majesty and Judgment that belong to his Seat, do not forbid Mercy to attend him; he sits upon a Seat of Mercy, and there (says Job) the Righteous might surely dispute with him; and there I should be delivered from his Terrors as an avenging God; there, though he judge me, yet he will plead my Cause; for the same Judge that sits upon a Throne of Glory, has taken upon him to become my Advocate. “There I behold him (says the Soul) with
“Millions of Pardons for vile Transgressors, and with abundant Favour for
“Rebels; such a Rebel am I, and such a
“Transgressor, and yet there is Pardon
“and Grace for me. I behold there Riches
“and Raiment for the Poor, the Needy,
“and the Naked, and Help for the weak
“Believer.” Then Goodness appears in the Face of God, in all the sweet Variety of its Divine Forms. There appears Long-suffering for old Sinners, and Patience for repeated Guilt, and Pity for the Miserable, and free Grace for those that deserve nothing but Vengeance. All this discovers it self in the Face of God, to a Soul that gets near him, even to his Mercy-Seat; and the Soul bows, and wonders, and worships.

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Serm. V. to God in Prayer. 147

ships, and makes still nearer Approaches, and receives the Grace, and rejoices in the Salvation.

The Soul puts in for a Share in this Mercy with Faith and Hope, and will not be denied, will not be excluded; then he uses that holy *Boldness*, that *παρρησία*, or Liberty of Speech, *Heb. iv. 16*. And this is the Language of Faith, when the Soul gets near to God: "Since there are so many Millions of Pardons with thee for Sinners, I will not go away without one; since there is such a Righteousness as that of thine own Son to clothe the Naked, I will not go away without being clothed with this Righteousness; since there are such Supplies of Strength for the Weak, I will not leave thy Seat till I get some Strength." The Soul then wrestles and pleads, and makes Supplication as *Jacob* did when he came near to God, *Genesis xxxii. 22*. *I will not let thee go except thou bless me.* The Soul beholds in God Mercy enough for the largest Multitude of Sinners, and Pardons large enough for the blackest Offences; it sees *Paul* the Persecutor and Blasphemer so near to the Right-Hand of God in Glory, that it cries out with a joyful Faith, "All the Aggravations of my Guilt shall no more divide me from the Mercy-Seat, shall no more prevent my Hope and Help in God; for
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“there sits *Paul* the Persecutor and Blasphemer; and he was set forth as an Example how full God is of Mercy!” 1 Tim. i. 16. *I obtained Mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all Long-Suffering, for a Pattern to Believers.* This is the Temper, this the Voice, and this the Language of a Soul that gets near to God, even to his Seat, considered as a Seat of Majesty, of Judgment, and of Grace.

I proceed now to the *second* Sign or Attendant of *holy Nearness to God in Prayer.*

Idly, When a Soul comes near to God in Prayer, there will generally be *some sweet Taste of the special Love of God, and warm Returns of Love again to God from the Soul.* The Soul that comes near to God, is not satisfied meerly with low Degrees of Faith and Hope, with some feeble Dependence, and some faint Expectations of Mercy; it can hardly leave God till it has an Assurance. Faith and Hope in the Mercy of God, are different from that Joy that arises from the immediate Sensations of Divine Love. The Psalmist in the 63^d Psalm, ver. 1, 2, &c. seems to have a Reference to both these Particulars together, which I have already mentioned. *My Soul thirsteth for thee, my Flesh longeth for thee, to see thy Power and thy Glory, so as I have seen thee in the Sanctuary.* I have seen thee in the Sanctuary as sitting upon a Throne of Ma-

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jeſty, on a Seat of Judgment and of Grace ;
I have ſeen thy Power and thy Glory there,
and I have alſo ſeen ſomething more than
this, I have taſted ſome ſpecial Loving-
Kindneſs, and that *Loving-Kindneſs is better*
than Life, therefore my Lips ſhall praiſe thee.
I have had a Senſe of the ſpecial Love of
God ſhed abroad in my Soul ; I have
known his Love is exerciſed towards me,
therefore my Soul is full of Praise. God
will ſeldom let a Soul that is got ſo near
him by holy Labour and Fervency of Spirit,
go away meerly with Hope and Depen-
dence, without ſome ſacred Delight and
Joy.

A Saint that has drawn near to God in
Worſhip, will tell you his own rich Expe-
riences, and ſay, “ When I found him
“ whom my Soul loveth, I was conſtrained
“ to break forth into theſe ſweet Expres-
“ ſions, *I am my Beloved’s, and my Beloved*
“ *is mine* ; for I love him above all Things,
“ and my Love is but the Effect of his.
“ In that bleſſed Hour I felt, and I was
“ aſſured of that mutual Relation between
“ God and me : I found ſo much of his
“ Image ſtamped on me, that I knew I
“ was the Lord’s ; whence I rejoice in the
“ full Perſuaſion of his Love. I know he
“ loves me, for *his ſanctifying Spirit hath*
“ *witneſſed with my Spirit, that I am one of*
“ *his Children* ; and I know that I love
“ him.”

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“ him, for my Spirit witnesseth also as an
 “ Echo to his Spirit, that I have chosen
 “ him for my Father, my Ruler, and my
 “ God, and have furrendred my self to
 “ him on his own Terms; and I address him
 “ as my *Father*, with Words of the choicest
 “ Affection, and of most endeared Sentiments of Soul.”

When a Person, in whom Grace is wrought, gets so near to God, and sees this God in his own Loveliness, and in his kindest Perfections, there are some new Divine Passions kindled in the Soul towards this God, towards this first Beauty, towards this Original of all Perfection and Goodness; and God will seldom let one come so near him, without showing him the Love of his Heart; and the Name of the devout Worshipper graven (as it were) on the Palms of his Hands, or in the Book of his Mercy. He speaks to the Soul in his own Divine Language, “ Son, or Daughter,
 “ be of good Chear, thy Sins are forgiven thee.
 “ O Man, thou art greatly beloved. I am
 “ your God, and you are my People. I have
 “ bought thee dear, and thou art mine. I
 “ have created thee, O Jacob; I have formed
 “ thee, O Israel; I have redeemed thee,
 “ Believer, and thou art for ever mine.
 And such Discoveries of the Love of God to the Soul, draw out still more Love from the Soul towards God, and raise more

cred Exercises of Divine Love in one Hour, than a whole Year of common Devotions can do; and the Saint learns more of this sacred Sensation of the Love of God, than Years of cold and common Devotions would teach him.

III^{dly}, When the Soul gets near to God in Prayer, *there will be a Hatred of Sin at the very Thoughts of it, and holy Meltings and Mournings under the Remembrance of its own Sins.* "How hateful does Sin appear, (will the Soul say) now I am come so near to the Seat of a holy God! Never did I see Sin in so dark and so odious Colours, as this Hour reveals and discovers to me; never did I so sensibly behold the Abomination that is in all Sin, as now I do; I never saw it so contrary to all that is in God, to his Holiness, to his Glory, to his Justice, and to his Grace. O Wretch that I am, that I should ever have indulged Iniquity! that I should ever have born with such an infinite Evil in my Heart! that I should ever take Delight in such Mischief against God! Now I hate and abhor my self because of Sin. *O that my Head were Waters, and my Eyes a Fountain of Tears, that I might weep Day and Night, because I have been such a Sinner so long, and because I am so much a Sinner still!*" The Heart of a Saint that

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comes near to God, is pained at the Memory of old Sins ; and together with a present Sweetness of Divine Love, there is a Sort of Anguish at the Thoughts of past Iniquities. A present God will make past Sins look dreadful and heinous ; therefore it is that Sin looks so little to us, and appears so light a Thing, because we so seldom get near to the Seat of God, and bring our Iniquities to that divine Light.

It is a very common Instance, and you all know it, that a Blot or Spot on a Paper or a Garment, looks so much deeper, when the Place you view it in is lighter ; at Noon-day, and in the Eye of the Sun, those smaller Blemishes appear, which at other times are utterly unseen ; and every greater Spot, every fouler Stain looks most odious and disagreeable. Just thus it is with the Soul, when 'tis displayed under the Eye of the Sun of Righteousness ; every Blemish, every Defilement appears, and the Soul hates it self so far as it is sinful, while Sin it self looks infinitely more odious. Therefore *Job* says, *Job* ix. 30. *Should I wash myself in Snow-Water, and make my self never so clean, thou wouldst plunge me in the Ditch, and my own Clothes would abhor me ;* that is, should I use all the Methods of Cleansing that are possible, and then enter into thy immediate Presence, that Light of thy Presence would discover so many Spots

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Spots and Defilements upon me, as if I had just plunged my self in a Ditch, and my Garments had been all over defiled.

IVthly, At such a Time there is a *Power and Virtue enters into the Soul, coming from a present God, to resist Sin, and to oppose great Temptation. I can do all Things, if Christ be near me to strengthen me*, says the Apostle, *Philip. iv. 13.* When I was afflicted with the Buffetings of Satan, says the same Apostle, *2 Cor. xiii. 8, 9.* for this I applied my self to the Mercy-Seat, and I got near to the Throne of Grace; there I pleaded with my God, and I received this Answer from him, *My Grace is sufficient for thee*; then, says he, *I could glory in Infirmities and in Persecutions for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong*; when I feel my own Weakness, and see Almighty Strength near me, and engaged on my Side, then I grow strong in Courage, and with Success encounter my most powerful Adversaries. *I will not fear* (says David) *tho' thousands have set themselves together against me, if thou art with me, my Strength and my Rock: I will walk through the Shadow of the Valley of Death, and fear no Evil, Psalm xxiii. 4.* for thou art with me. Divine Courage and Fortitude are encreased abundantly by coming so near to the Throne of God.

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There is a Zeal for God enters into the Soul at such a Season, and the Soul is more desirous to lay out it self for the Glory of God at such a Time: *Moses* had drawn near to God in the Mount, and had been with him Forty Days; when he came down from the Mount, he beheld the People filled with Idolatry, and he brake the Tables of Stone in an Impatience of Zeal; his Zeal for God was so great, he hardly knew what he did; his Zeal for God was kindled high, because he had been so near to God, and just conversing with him. So, *Isaiah* vi. 8. when that great Saint had been near to God, and had seen him in the Glories of his Holiness, and had some Courage and Confidence in his Love, Now I will go, says he, upon any difficult Message: *Here am I, send me*, tho' it be to fulfil the hardest Service.

There will be generally all these Attendants of great Nearness to God, (*viz.*) Power against Temptation, Strength against Sin, Zeal for the Glory of God in the World, and Ability to perform difficult Duties.

Vthly, There will be a *Spiritual Frame introduced into the Heart, and a Distance from all carnal Things*. "Stand by (saith the Soul to all this World) whilst I go to seek my God; but when I have found him, then the World of it self, as to all

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"the Temporal Concerns of it, vanisheth
"and goes out of Sight. When I get so
"near to Heaven, this Earth is so small
"a Point, that it cannot be seen, and those
"Comforts among the Creatures, that
"were fair as the Moon, or bright as the
"larger Stars, are vanquish'd and lost,
"and disappear under the brighter Light
"of this Sun." Created Beauties, with
all their little Glimmerings, tempt the
Soul toward them, when God is absent;
as a twinkling Candle entices the silly Fly
at Midnight to hover about the Rays of it;
but the Candle faints under the broad
Beams of rising Day-light; it has no Power
to attract those little buzzing Animals in
the Morning, and 'tis quite invisible at
Noon. So the very Approach of God
makes Creatures appear more contemptible
and worthless in the Esteem of a devout
Christian; a God near at Hand will drive
the Creatures afar off; and a present God
will command the World to utter Ab-
sence. None of the tempting Vanities of
Life come in Sight, and sometimes not the
most important Concerns of it remain be-
fore the Eye of the Saint, when God
appears and fills the View and Prospect
of his Spirit. The Soul is taken up with
Spiritual Things, therefore carnal ones va-
nish; 'tis entertained and filled with the
Majesty of God, the Riches of Grace,

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redeeming Grace; with the Glory of *Christ Jesus*, the Beauty of his Person, the Honour of his Characters, his various Excellencies, and the Super-eminence of his Offices, both in the Constitution and Discharge of them; the Soul is then warmed with a zealous Concern for the Church of *Christ*, and big with Designs for the Honour of God, while it forgets the World.

Or at such a Season as this, when we get near to God in Prayer, if we think of any of the Creatures, it is all in order to the Honour of God. If I think of a Brother, or Father, or Child, "O may they all be Instruments in thine Hand, for thine Honour here among Men, and for ever among blessed Angels!" The Soul does not ask for Riches and Glories on Earth for them; but, "May they live in thy Sight, O Lord!" If it thinks of the Comforts of Life, or Blessings of Prosperity, "O let *Holiness to the Lord* be written upon them all; for I would not have one of them but what may subserve thine Honour in the World." If the Soul thinks of its Pains, and Sorrows, and Reproaches, it longs for the Sanctification of them at present, and the Removal of them in due Season, that it may serve its God the better. Thus the Soul is, as it were, taken out of *Self*, when it gets near to God.

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"Let me have the Conveniencies of
"Life, (says the Christian) not so much
"for my Ease, as that I may better ad-
"vance thine Honour." The Soul grows
weaned from self at such a Time; it breaks
out of the narrow Circle of Self when it
gets nigh to God. If it thinks of the Mi-
nisty or of Ordinances, "Lord, let that
"Ministry be for the Advancement of thy
"Name! Lord, let these Ordinances be for
"the Increase of thy Glory in the World,
"for the Advancement of Grace in my
"Heart, and bring me nearer to Heaven!
"If it thinks of the Kingdom, or the Par-
"liament, Powers or Princes in this World,
"'tis with this Design, that God may be
"glorified in the Courts of Princes, and
"in Parliaments, and honoured in Armies
"and Nations, known and unknown."

Thus the Soul always keeps within Sight of
God; it still keeps all its Designs within the
Circle of God, and aims still at the Glories
of its heavenly Father. If it thinks of Life
or of Death, "I would not ask Life (says the
"Saint) but to glorify thee; nor Death, but
"to glorify thee better, and to enjoy more of
"thee."

Thus when the Soul is near to God, 'tis
in a Divine Light that it sees all Things,
'tis still with a Design for God; and when
it indulges the Thoughts toward any
Creature, 'tis without turning aside a

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Moment from its God. Thus carnal Things are taken into the Mind, and spiritualized by the Presence of God, the infinite Spirit, when the Soul approaches so near to his Seat.

Vlthly, There will then be a *Fixedness of Heart in Duty without wandring, and Liveliness without tiring*. At other Times of common and usual Worship, when the Saint is in too formal and too cold a Frame, the Heart roves perpetually, and is soon weary; but when we get near to God, then we have a little Emblem of Heaven within us, where they worship God Day and Night without Interruption, and without Weariness. When we wait upon God at this rate, we are still mounting up higher and higher, as with *Eagles Wings*; we walk first without fainting, and then run without wearying; at last, we fly as an Eagle, and make Haste to the fuller Possession of our God, *Isaiah xl. ult.* The Soul is then detained in the Presence of God with overpowering Delight, and it cannot be taken away from the Object of its dearest Satisfaction. This is a Joy above all other Joys, above all the Joys of Sense, above all the Joys of the Intellectual World that are not Divine and Holy. There are some Pleasures that arise from Philosophical and Intellectual Notions, that are superior to the Pleasures of Sense; but the Pleasure of be-
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ing near to God in Devotion, far transcends all these.

Animal Nature, at such a Season, may be worn out, and faint and die under it; but the Mind is not weary. 'Tis possible for Divine Transports to rise so high as to break this feeble Frame of Flesh, and dissolve it; and there have been Instances of Persons that have been near to a Dissolution of Mortality under the Power of Divine Extasies: but the Soul has not been faint, has felt no Weariness.

There are at such a Season most pleasurable Thoughts of Heaven; there are some bright Glimpses of that blessed State when a Christian attains this *Nearness* to God; for Heaven is a State of *Nearness to God everlasting and uninterrupted*; nor are the blessed Inhabitants of that World ever weary of their Company or their Business; and thus, when there is any Thing a-kin to Heaven brought down to the Saints in this mortal State, they know it cannot be interrupted and perpetual; and therefore there is a Desire of frequent Returns of such Seasons as these are, while they are here on Earth. And as *Christ*, the Bridegroom, speaks to his Saints in the Language of *Solomon*, "Let me see thy Face often, my Spouse, my Beloved, let me hear thy Voice; Song ii. 14. & viii. 13." so the Saint says to his God at such a Season, "O may I
" often

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"often see thy Face in this Manner, may I
"often hear such a Voice as this is from
"thee, for I know not how to live without
"it." *Flee, my Beloved Saviour, and make
Haste to a speedy Return, and let there be
an uninterrupted and everlasting Converse
between God and my Soul.*

*Lastly, There is at such a Season often-
times a pouring out of the Soul before God with
some Freedom in the Gift, as well as the Grace
of Prayer. Meer Sighs and Groans are for
Persons at a Distance; but when we get
near to God, we speak to him even in his
Ear; and the Heart is full, and the Tongue
overflows.*

I grant there may be the Spirit of Prayer
assisting a poor Soul that cannot get near
to God, but still cries after him when he is
hidden, and expresses it self only in *Sighs and
in Groans unutterable*; so the Apostle tells us,
Rom. viii. 26. *The Spirit it self makes Interces-
sion in us with Groanings that cannot be uttered.*
And thus it may be, while God hides him-
self, while there is a Veil concealing God
from our Eyes, while there is any special
Temptation like a Mountain that separates
between God and our Souls, he may send his
Spirit to work us up to earnest Desires and
Longings after him.

But when this SPIRIT OF Prayer has
brought the Soul near, when God has
been pleased to turn aside the Veil, to re-
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move the Mountain, and to discover himself in all his Glory, Beauty, and Love, then there will be generally the *Gift of Prayer* also in exercise by the Assistance of the promised Spirit; and such Persons many Times are able to address themselves to God with much Freedom, and to pour out the Soul before God in proper Words, notwithstanding at other Times they appear to have but weak Capacities. When they have such affecting Sights of their own Sin and Guilt, and such surprizing Views of the Mercy of God manifested to them in particular, and at the same Time when they look upon all Things round them with a Design for the Glory of God; they are both naturally and divinely taught to pour out their Souls before God, and represent their Cares and Circumstances to him in affecting Language.

I will not say indeed, it is always so when any Soul gets near to God; there must be some Allowance made for the different Tempers and Constitutions, as I shall show immediately. There have also been some Instances of holy Men, whose Voice has, at such a Time, been over-powered with divine Pleasure, all their Powers have been transported and overwhelmed with rapturous Silence; but for the most Part holy Souls have found an uncommon Liberty of Language at the Throne of Grace at such Seasons.

sions. And this is one Reason, I am persuaded, why the *Gift of Prayer* is not so common a Thing as might be wished, because there is so little Nearness to God among the Professors of our Day. The Gift of Prayer abounds not among Christians in our Churches; O that I could say it was found more gloriously among Ministers, while in your Name we speak to the great God! But if there were a constant laborious Diligence in the Soul to get nearer to God, in all our secret as well as publick Addresses to him, we should find more Abundance of the *Gift of Prayer* poured down upon us by the Spirit, as well as brighter Evidences of every praying Grace.

I must conclude this Discourse before I proceed to the other Heads which were proposed; but I would not willingly leave it without a Caution or two, and one Reflection.

The first Caution is this; *Let not the humble mourning Christian, who walks carefully with God, under much Darknes and Fear, charge himself with utter Distance and Estrangement from the Throne of Grace, because he does not feel all these sacred Passions and Powers of Nature in lively Exercise, while he bows his Knees before the Lord: for I have described this blessed Privilege in the sublime Glory and Beauty of it, so as it has been often attained and enjoyed by Persons eminent in Grace* and

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and Religion, and especially such as have had lively Affections, and the Powers of animal Nature in a good Degree sanctified, and subservient to the Devotions of the Soul. But where the natural Spirits are low and sinking, and where Temptations and Darkness hang heavy upon the Mind, the Christian may truly draw near to God, so far as to find a gracious Acceptance with him, and may fetch secret Divine Communications from the Mercy-Seat to maintain his spiritual Life; tho' he feels but little of these Sensations of heavenly Pleasure, these more vigorous Efforts of Devotion and Joy. Yet let him neither deny nor despise those more elevated Enjoyments of Soul, those near and blessed Approaches to the Seat of God, with which others have been favoured.

The second Caution shall be address'd to those, who feel much of Rapture and Transport in their Hours of secret Piety. I intreat, *That they would not imagine themselves so often to enjoy this unspeakable Privilege of holy Nearness to God in Worship, if they do not sensibly find such an Increase of Holiness, as may prove effectually that they have been with God.* If they have been conversing with their Maker, like *Moses* in the Mount, there will be a Shine of Holiness upon the Face of their Souls. To pretend therefore to have enjoy'd much of God in the Closet, and to come down amongst Men peevish and fretful.

ful, or immediately to betray a carnal and covetous, or an haughty and intractable Spirit; these are Things of so inconsistent a Nature, that the succeeding Iniquity spoils the Devotion, and almost destroys the Presence to any sublime Degrees of it. Such Persons had need look well to themselves, and make a narrow Search within, whether their Hearts be sincere with God or no, lest they build all their Hopes upon the flashy Efforts of animal Nature, coupled with the Thoughts of some sacred Objects, and tack'd on to a Divine Meditation.

REFLECTION.

What a wretched Hindrance is this World to our Christian Profit and Pleasure! How often does it keep the Soul at a sad Distance from God! With what Difficulty and uneasy Reluctance, are we sometimes drawn, or rather dragg'd into Retirement, that the Soul may seek after God there! How many Excuses does the Flesh borrow from the Cares and Necessities of this Life, to delay, or to divert the Duty of Prayer? Our Memory, our Imagination, and our Senses, are faithful Purveyors and Treasurers for the World; they are ever representing to us the Things of this present State, the Trifles or the Busineses, the Cares or Amusements of it, the Labours or Delights which relate to this Life; and thereby we are diverted and separated

parated from God, and called away from him often, as soon as we begin to approach his Presence.

What a pernicious Enemy is this *Flesh* to the Soul, both in the Pleasures and the Pains of it! and this *World*, both in the Flatteries and the Frowns of it, and even in its necessary Cares! When we would give our God the upper Room in our Hearts, how is this World ready to get the Ascendant! How often does it break in upon our most sacred Retirements, and thrust it self, with all its Impertinencies, into our holy Meditations! How often does it spread a carnal Scene all over our Thoughts at once, and spoil our devoutest Hours! "I cannot dwell so long in my Closet as I would do (says a Christian) the World has such importunate Demands upon me." The World follows us into our Places of Retirement; the Exchange, or the Shop, presses into the Temple, and robs God even to his Face.

Let us then have a Care of the *Flesh*; let us have a Care of this *World*; we must be watchful over them as our most subtle and dangerous Enemies, if we would keep our Souls near to God, or often enjoy this Divine Privilege. Blessed *Enoch*! who could walk with God in the midst of all the busy and vicious Scenes of the old World! and he was translated to Heaven without calling at the Gates of Death, that he might give

166 *The Soul drawing near, &c. Sermon V.*

a glorious Testimony to Men how well God was pleased with him. *Happy Soul!* that could keep near to God, and maintain an holy and humble Converse with him, when *all Flesh had corrupted its way, and the Earth was full of Iniquity and Violence!* Blessed *Man!* who knew not what it was to die, but he knew what it was to be near to God; and his Faith and his Devotion were changed the shortest way into Sight and Enjoyment! *Happy Spirit!* who, without being absent at all from the Body, was brought near to the Seat of Divine Majesty, and in the fullest manner present with the Lord!



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SERMON VI.

Sins and Sorrows spread before God.

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*O that I knew where I might find him!
that I might come even to his Seat; I
would order my Cause before him, and
fill my Mouth with Arguments.*

The Second Part.

HERE is such a Thing as Con-
verse with God in Prayer, and
it is the Life and Pleasure of a
pious Soul: without it we are
no Christians; and he that
practises it most, is the best Follower of *Christ*:
for our Lord spent much Time in Converse
with his heavenly Father. This is Balm that
eases the most raging Pains of the Mind,
when the wounded Conscience comes to the
Mercy-Seat, and finds Pardon and Peace
there. This is the Cordial that revives and
exalts

exalts our Natures, when the Spirit, broken with Sorrows, and almost fainting to Death, draws near to the Almighty Physician, and is healed and refreshed. The Mercy-Seat in Heaven is our surest and sweetest Refuge in every Hour of Distress and Darkness on Earth: this is our daily Support and Relief, while we are passing through a World of Temptations and Hardships in the way to the promised Land. *'Tis good for us to draw near to God*, Psal. lxxiii. 28.

And yet so much is Human Nature sunk down and fallen from God, that even his own Children are ready to indulge a Neglect of Converse with him, if their Souls are not always upon the Watch. But let it be remembred here, that so much as we abate of this Divine Entertainment among the Vanities or Amusements of the World, the Businesses or Burdens of Life; so much we lose of the Glory and Joy of Religion, and deprive our Souls of the Comfort that God invites us to receive.

Job was encompass'd with Sorrows all around, and his Friends had censur'd him as a vile Hypocrite, and a great Sinner, because he was so terribly afflicted by the Hand of God; whither should he run now but to his heavenly Father, and tell him of all his sufferings?

From the Practice of this holy Man, I thought we might have sufficient warrant to

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to draw this Inference, (*viz.*) That when a Saint gets near to God in Prayer, he tells him all his Circumstances, and pleads for Help. And that is the Doctrine which I am endeavouring now to improve. O if I could but come near him, even to his Seat, I would order my Cause before him: I would spread all my Concerns before his Eye, and I would plead with him for Relief: I would fill my Mouth with Arguments.

Four Things I proposed in the Prosecution of this Doctrine.

- I. To consider what it is for a Soul to get near to God in Prayer.
- II. What particular Subjects doth a Soul, thus brought near to the Mercy-Seat, converse with God about.
- III. Why he chuses to tell all his Circumstances and his Sorrows to God, when he is thus near him.
- IV. How he pleads for Relief.

1st. We have already considered, *What it is for a Soul to get near to the Seat of God, and What are the usual Attendants of such a Privilege.* At such a Season the holy Soul will have an awful and adoring Sense of the Majesty of God, a becoming Fear of his Terrors, and some sweeter Taste of his Love. There will be a divine Hatred of every Sin, and a sensible Virtue and Influence

proceeding from a present God, to resist every Temptation : there will be a spiritual and heavenly Temper diffusing it self through the whole Soul, and all the Powers of it; a Fixedness of Heart without wandering; and a Liveliness without tiring : no Weariness is felt in the Spirit at such a Season, even though the Flesh may be ready to faint under the overpowering Sweetness : then the Soul with Freedom opens it self before the Eye of God, and melts and flows in divine Language, whether it complain or rejoice. But I have finished this Head, and repeat no more.

*II*dly, *What are some of the particular Circumstances, or Subjects of Complaint, that a Saint brings to God when he comes near him.*

In general, a Saint, when he is near to God, *has all the Fulness of his Heart breaking out into holy Language* ; he pours out his whole Self before his God and his Father ; all the infinite Affairs that relate to the Flesh and Spirit, to this Life, and that which is to come ; all Things in Heaven, and all Things in Earth, created or uncreated, may, at one Time or other, be the Subjects of Converse between God and a holy Soul. When the Question is ask'd by a carnal Man, *What can a Christian talk with God so long and so often about ?* The Christian, in a divine Frame, answers ; " He hath Matter enough for Con-

" verse

"verse with God, to wear out Time, and
"to fill up Eternity." It may be as well
ask'd on the other Side, *What has he not to*
say? What is there that relates to God, or to
himself, to the upper, or the lower World,
that he may not at some time say to his God?

But I must confine my self from wandering
in so large a Field, that I may comport with
the Design of my Text. Tho' a good Man,
in devout Prayer, often spreads his Hopes
and his Joys before the Lord, as well as his
Sorrows, Fears, and Distresses; yet I shall
at present endeavour to set forth only the
mournful and complaining Representations
of his Circumstances that he makes before the
Throne of God.

1st, If I could but come near the Mercy-
Seat, I would confess how great my Sins are,
and I would pray for pardoning Grace. I would
say, "How vile I am by Nature;" I would
count my original Descent from *Adam* the
great Transgressor, and humble my self at
the Foot of a holy God, because I am the
Descendant of such a Sinner.—I would tell
him how much viler I have made my self by
Practice; "I have been an Enemy in my
Mind by Nature, and guilty of many wic-
ked Works, whereby I have farther e-
stranged my self from him." I would tell
my God how multiplied my Transgressions
have been before I knew him, and how ag-
gravated they have been since I have been

acquainted with him. I would acquaint him with the Frequency of my returning Guilt, how I have sinned against Mercies, against Reproofs, against Warnings received often from his Word, and often from his Providence.

I may appeal to the Souls of many present, whether they have not had the greatest Freedom of Confession of their Sins, when they have been nearest to God, even tho' he be a God of Holiness. At other Times, they have not only been averse to confess to any Friend, but even unwilling to talk over to themselves the Aggravation of their Iniquities, or to mention them in Prayer: but when they are brought thus near the Throne of God, they unbosom themselves before him, they pour out their Sins and their Tears together, with a sweet and mournful Satisfaction.

"I behold (says the Saint) the great Atonement, the Blood of Jesus, and therefore I may venture to confess my great Iniquities, for the Satisfaction is equal to them all. When I behold God upon his Seat, I behold the *Lamb in the midst of the Throne as it had been slain*, and he is my Peace-maker. I see his all-sufficient Sacrifice, his atoning Blood, his perfect, his justifying Righteousness." The Soul then answers the Call of God with great Readiness, when God says in *Isaiah i. 18. Come let us*

Serm. VI. *spread before God.* 173

reason together ; tho' your Sins have been as
Scarlet, they shall be as Wool. " I am ready
" (says the Soul) to enter into such Rea-
" sonings ; I am ready to confess before thee,
" that my Sins are all Crimson and Scarlet,
" but there is cleansing Blood with thy Son ;
" Blood that has washed the Garments of
" a thousand Sinners, and made them white
" as Snow ; and it has the same Virtue still
" to wash mine too : I trust in it, and re-
" joice when I behold that Blood sprinkled
" upon the Mercy-Seat, and therefore I
" grow confident in Hope, and draw yet
" nearer to God, a reconciled God, since his
" Throne has the Memorials of a bleeding
" Sacrifice upon it. "

adly, If I could get near the Seat of God,
I would tell him *how many my Enemies are,*
and how strong ; how malicious, and how full of
Rage, — And I would beg Strength against them,
and Victory over them. — I would say as Da-
vid ; Many there be that hate me, many there be
that rise up against me ; and many there be that
say of my Soul, there is no Help for him in God ;
but thou, O God, art my Glory, my Shield, and
the Lifter up of my Head, Psalm iii. Then,
says the Soul, I would complain to God of
all my indwelling Corruptions, of the Body
of Death that dwells in me, or in which I
dwelt ; and say, O wretched Man that I am,
who shall deliver me ? I would tell him then
of the secret working of Pride in my Heart,
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though I long to be humble ; of the rising of Ambition in my Soul, though I would willingly maintain a middle State amongst Men, and not aim and aspire to be great. I would acquaint him of the Vanity of my own Mind, though I am perpetually endeavouring to subdue it. I would tell him, with Tears, of my sinful Passions, of my Anger and Impatience, and the Workings of Envy and Revenge in me ; of the perpetual Stirrings of disorderly Appetites, whereby I am led away from my God : I would tell him of the Hardness of my Heart, and the Obstinacy of my Temper. I would open before his Eye, all the Vices of my Constitution ; all those secret Seeds of Iniquity that are ever budding and blossoming to bring forth Fruit to Death. These Things are fit to mourn before the Lord, when the Soul is come near to his Seat.

I would complain of this fore Enemy, the *World*, that is perpetually besetting me, that strikes upon all my Senses, that by the Ears, and the Eyes, and all the outward Faculties, draws my Heart away from God my best Friend. I would tell him of the Rage of *Satan*, that watchful and malicious Adversary ; that I cannot engage in any Duty of Worship, but he is ready to throw in some foolish or vain Suggestion to divert me ; and I would look forward, and point to my last Enemy *Death*, and beg the Presence of

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my God with me; when I walk through that dark Valley: " Lord, when I enter into that Conflict, assist me, that I may fear no Evil, " but be made more than a Conqueror thro' him " that has loved me. "

3dly, I would tell him what Darknefs I labour under, either in respect of Faith, or Practice. If I am perplexed in my Mind, and intangled about any of the Doctrines of the Gospel, I would then tell my God what my Intanglements are, where the Difficulty lies; and I would beg, that by his Spirit and his Word, he would solve the Controversy, and set his own Truth before me in his own divine Light. And then in Point of Practice, What Darknefs lies upon the Spirit at such a Time, is revealed before God: " My Way is hedged up, I know not what Path to chuse; " 'tis very hard for me to find out Duty: " show me, O Lord, the Way wherein I " should walk, and mark out my Path plain " for me. "

4thly, I would mourn, and tell him, how little Converse I have with himself, how much he is hidden from me: I would complain to him, how far off I am from him the most Part of my Life, how few are the Hours of my Communion with him, how short is the Visit, how much his Face is conceal'd from me, and how far my Heart is divided from him. A Soul then says, " Surely there is " too great a Distance between me and my " God,

" God, my heavenly Father ; " and cries out with Bitterness, *Why is God so far from me, and why is my Heart so far from God ?* How often do I wait upon him in his own Sanctuary, and among his Saints, but I am not favour'd with the Sight of his Power and Glory there ! And how often do I seek him in my secret Retirements, but I find him not ! I would tell him how often I read his Promises in the Gospel, and taste no Sweetness : I go frequently to those Wells of Consolation, and they seem to be dry ; then *I turn my Face, and go away ashamed.*

5thly, I would tell him too of my temporal Troubles, if I got near to God, because they unfit me for his Service, they make me incapable of honouring him in the World, and render me unfit for enjoying him in his Ordinances : I would tell him how they damp my Zeal, how they bow my Spirit down, and make me go mourning all the Day long, to the Dishonour of Christianity, which is a Dispensation of Grace and Joy. Thus I might complain before God of Pains, of Weakness, of Sickness, of the Disorders of my Flesh : I might complain there too of the Weakness of all my Powers, the Want of Memory, the Scatterings and Confusions that are upon my Thoughts, the Wandrings of my Fancy, and the unhappy Influence that a feeble and diseased Body has upon the Mind : " O my God, how am I divided from

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"thee, by dwelling in such a Tabernacle!
 "Still patching up a tottering Cottage, and
 "wasting my best Hours in a painful At-
 "tendance on the Infirmities of the Flesh!"

I might then take the Liberty of spread-
 ing before my God, all the Sorrows and Vex-
 ations of Life, that unhinge my Soul from its
 Centre, that throw it off from my Guard, and
 harry and expose me to daily Temptations.
 I might complain of my Reproaches from
 Friends and Enemies; because these, many
 Times, wear out the Spirit, and unfit it for
 Acts of lively Worship. These are my week-
 ly Sorrows and Groans, these are my daily
 Fears and Troubles; and these shall be spread
 before the Eyes of my God, in the happy
 Hour when I get near him.

Lastly, I would not go away without a
 Word of Pity and Complaint concerning my Rela-
 tions, my Friends, and Acquaintance, that are
 far off from God. I would put in one Word
 of Petition for them that are careless and un-
 concerned for themselves: I would weep a
 little at the Seat of God for them; I would
 leave a Tear or two at the Throne of Mercy,
 for my dearest Relatives in the Flesh, for
 Children, Brothers or Sisters, that they might
 be brought near to God, in the Bonds of the
 Spirit. Then would I remember my Friends
 in Christ, my Brethren and Kindred in the
 Gospel; such as labour under heavy Burdens,
 languish under various Infirmities of Life, or
 I 5 groan.

groan under the Power of strong Temptations. When God indulges me the Favour of his Ear, I would spread their Wants and Sorrows before him, together with my own, and *make Supplication for all the Saints*. I would leave a Petition at the Mercy-Seat for my native Country, that Knowledge and Holiness may overspread the Nation: that our King may be a nursing-Father to the Church, and our Princes may be Blessings to the Land. And while I send up my Requests for the *British Islands*, I would breathe out many a Sigh for *Zion*, that she may be *the Joy of the whole Earth*. I proceed now to,

III. The Third Head of Enquiry, which is this; *Why does a Saint, when he gets near to God, delight to tell him all his Circumstances, and all his Sorrows?*

In general I might say this, Because it is so seldom, at least in our Day, that a Saint gets very near to God; therefore, when he finds that happy Minute, he says to his God all that he wants to say; he tells him all his Heart, he pours out all his Wants before him; because these Seasons are very few. 'Tis but here and there an extraordinary Christian, who maintains constant Nearness to God: the best complain of too much Distance and Estrangement. But to descend to Particulars.

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1. *He is our chief Friend, and 'tis an Ease to the Soul, to vent it self in the Bosom of a Friend, when we are in his Company.* More especially as it was in the Case of *Job*, when other Friends failed him when he had begun to tell them some of his Sorrows, and withal maintain'd his own Integrity; they would not believe him, but became his Troublers instead of his Comforters: *My Friends scorn me, says Job, chap. xvi. ver. 20. but mine Eye pours out Tears to God.* I go to my best Friend, my Friend in Heaven, when my Friends here on Earth neglect me.

Man is a sociable Creature, and our Joys and our Sorrows are made to be communicated, that thereby we may double the one, and alleviate the other. There is scarce any Piece of human Nature, be it never so stupid, but feels some Satisfaction in the Pleasure of a Friend, in communicating the Troubles and the Pleasures that it feels; but those that have God for their highest and best Friend, they love to be often exercising such Acts of Friendship with him; and rather with him than with any Friend besides, rather with him than all besides him. This is the noblest and highest Friendship; all Condescension and Compassion on the one side, and all Infirmary and Dependance on the other; and yet both joined in mutual Satisfaction. Amazing Grace of God to Man? The Christian rejoices in this admirable divine Indulgence,

gence, and delights in all Opportunities to employ and improve it.

Besides, this is the Way to maintain the Vigour of Piety, and keep all the Springs of divine Love ever open and flowing in his own Heart; therefore he makes many a Visit to the Mercy-Seat, and takes occasion from every troublesome Occurrence in Life, to betake himself to his Knees, and improves every Sorrow he meets on Earth, to encrease his Acquaintance with Heaven. He delights to talk all his Grievances over with his God. *Hannah*, the Mother of *Samuel*, is a blessed Example of this Practice, 1 *Sam.* i. 10. When *she was in Bitterness of Soul*, by reason of a fore Affliction, and the teizing Humour of her Rival, *she prayed to the Lord, and wept sore*: and when she had left her Sorrows at the Mercy-Seat, *she went away, and did eat, and her Countenance was no more sad*, ver. 18. So saith the Christian, " I commit my Sorrows
" to my God; he is my best Friend, and I
" go away, and am no more sad: I have poured out my Cares into his Ear, and cast my
" Burdens upon him, and I leave them there
" in Peace."

2. The Saint knows God will understand him right, and will judge right concerning his Case and his Meaning. Though the Expressions (it may be) are very imperfect, below the common Language of Men, and Propriety

priety of Speech, yet God knows the Meaning of the Soul; for 'tis his own Spirit that breathes in that Soul, and he *knows the Mind of his Spirit*, Rom. viii. The Friends of Job perverted his Sense: Therefore he turns aside to God, for he knows God would understand him. 'Tis a very great Advantage, when we spread our Concerns before another Person, to be well assured that Person will take us right, will take in our meaning fully, and judge aright concerning our Cause. Now we may be assured of this, when we speak to our God: he *knows our Thoughts afar off*, and all our Circumstances, better infinitely than we can tell him. These our poor imperfect Expressions of our Wants, shall be no Hindrances to his full Supplies, nor any Bar to his Exercise of Friendship toward us.

3. A Saint pours out his Soul before God, because *he is sure of Secresy there*. How many Things are there transacted between God and a holy Soul, that relate to Guilt and inward Workings of Iniquity, that he could never publish to the World! and many Things also that concern his Conduct in Life, his Embarrassments of Spirit, his Difficulties, his Follies, or the Obstinacy, Guilt, or Follies of his Friends or Relatives, which Prudence and Shame forbid him to tell his Fellow-Creatures; and yet he wants to spread them all before God his best Friend,

Friend, God his dearest Relative, the Friend nearest to his Heart. There may be many Circumstances and Cases in Life, especially in the spiritual Life, which one Christian could hardly communicate to another, tho' under the strictest Bonds and Tyes of natural, and civil, and sacred Relation: But we may communicate these very Affairs, these secret Concerns with our God, and unburden our Souls of every Care, without the least publick Notice.

We cannot be perfectly secure of this with Regard to any Creature; for when we have experienced the Faithfulness of a Friend many Years, he may possibly be at last unfaithful: Unfaithfulness is mingled with our Nature since the Fall, and it's impossible any Person can be infallibly secure from it. Psal. lxii. 9. *Men of low Degree are Vanity, and Great Men are a Lye*; but we may leave our Case with our God, as secure as tho' we had communicated it to none: Nay, we may be easily secure and free in speaking, because God knows all before-hand. Our Complaint adds nothing to his Knowledge, although it eases our Souls, and gives us sweet Satisfaction in having such a Friend to speak to.

4. A Saint believes the Equity, Faithfulness, and the Love of God; therefore he spreads his Case before him. *His Equity, that the Judge of all the Earth will do right; the Righteous*

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may plead with him. *His Faithfulness*, that he will fulfil all his Promises : And *his Love*, that he will take Compassion on those who are afflicted ; he will be tender to those who are miserable. *David* takes Occasion from this, to address God under his Sufferings and Sorrows ; *Psal. lxii. 1, 2. He is my Rock, and my Salvation, and my Defence, I shall not be moved ; therefore my Soul waits upon God ; my Refuge is in him : He is a God that hears Prayer, therefore unto him shall all Flesh come, Psal. lxxv. 1, 2.* God will not account our Complaints troublesome, tho' they be never so often repeated ; whereas Men are quickly wearied with the Importunities of those who are poor and needy. Great Men are ready to shut their Doors against those who come too often for Relief ; but God delights to hear often from his People, and to have them ask continually at his Door for Mercy. Tho' he has Almighty Power with him, saith *Job, Yet he will not plead against me with his great Power : No ; but he would put Strength in me ; he would teach me how I should answer him ; how I should answer his Justice, by Appeals to his Mercy ; and how I should speak prevailingly before him.*

5. Lastly, A Saint tells God all his Circumstances and Sorrows at such a Season, because he hopes for Relief from him, and from him only ; for it is impossible Creatures can give

give Relief under any Trouble, unless God make them Instruments of Relief. And there are some Troubles in which Creatures cannot be our Helpers, but our Help must come only from God, and that in a more immediate Way. Whatsoever be our Distresses, whether it arise from past Guilt, and the Torments of an anxious and troubled Conscience; or whether it arise from the Working of indwelling Sin, the Strength of Temptation, or the Violence of temporal Afflictions, still God is able and willing to give Relief. *Call upon me (saith the Lord) in the Day of Trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me; Psal. l. 15.* And he hath never said to the Seed of Jacob, *seek ye my Face in vain, Isa. xlv. 19.*

IV. The *Fourth* general Head of Discourse which I propos'd, is to shew, *How a Saint, near the Mercy-Seat, pleads with God for Relief.*

Holy *Job* tells us in this Text, that if he was got near to the Seat of God, *he would fill his Mouth with Arguments.*

Not as though he would inform God of the Necessity, or the Justice of his Cause, beyond what he knew before; no, this is impossible: *He that teacheth Man all Things, shall he not know? Psal. xciv. 9, 10.* He who orders all the Circumstances of our Lives, and every Stroke of his own Rod, can he

be unacquainted with any Thing that relates to our Sorrows ?

Nor can we use Arguments with God to awaken his Ear, or move his Compassion, as tho' he had neglected us, or forgotten our Distress; for *all Things are for ever naked and open before the Eyes of him with whom we have to do.* The Shepherd of *Israel* cannot slumber; nor does his Mercy want our Awakenings.

But in this Sort of Expressions, the great God condescends to talk, and to transact Affairs with us, and permits us to treat with him in a Way suited to our Weakness: He would have us plead and argue with him, that we may shew how deep a Sense we have of our own Wants, and how entirely we depend on his Mercy. Since we cannot converse with him in a Way equal to his own Majesty and Godhead, he stoops to talk with us in such a Way as is most agreeable to our State, and most easy to our Apprehension: He speaks such Language as we can understand, and invites us to humble Conference with him in the same Way. *Come,* says God to his People, by *Isaiah* his Prophet, *Come now, and let us reason together,* Isa. i. 18. And he often, in Holy Scripture, represents himself as moved and influenced by the Prayers and Pleadings of his afflicted Saints; and he has ordained, before-hand, that the Day when he prepares

prepares their Hearts to pray, shall be the Day when his Ear shall hear the Desire of the Humble, and shall be the Season of their Deliverance, Psal. x. 17.

If you enquire, *How a Christian pleads with his God, and whence does he borrow his Arguments?* I answer, That according to the various Sorrows and Difficulties which attend him, so various may his Pleadings be for the Removal of them. There is not a *Circumstance* which belongs to his Affliction, but he may draw some Argument from it to plead for Mercy; there is not one *Attribute* of the *Divine Nature*, but he may use it with holy Skill, and thereby plead for Grace; there is not one *Relation* in which God stands to his *People*, nor one *Promise* of his *Covenant*, but may at some Time or other afford an Argument in Prayer. But the strongest and sweetest Argument that a Christian knows, is the *Name and Mediation* of *Jesus Christ his Lord*. 'Tis for the Sake of *Christ*, who has purchased all the Blessings of the *Covenant*, that a Saint hopes to receive them; and for the Sake of *Christ*, he pleads that God would bestow them.

But having treated largely on this Subject, in my Discourse, intitled, *A Guide to Prayer*, I shall not repeat the same Things here, but refer the Reader to the first Chapter of that Book, *Seet. 5.*

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It remains that I make a few useful Reflections on the whole foregoing Discourse.

REFLECTION I.

What a dull and uncomfortable thing is Religion, without drawing near to God! for this is the very Business for which Religion is designed; the End and Aim of Religion is *getting nigh to God*; if it attain not this End, it is nothing.

O the Madness of Hypocrites, who satisfy themselves to toil in long Forms of Worship, and appear perpetually in the Shapes of Religion, but unconcerned whether they ever get *near to God* by it, or no! They lose the End and Design for which Religion was made. What if we know all the Doctrines of the Gospel; what if we can talk rationally about Natural Religion; what if we can deduce one Truth from another, so as to spread a whole Scheme of Godliness before the Eyes or Ears of those we converse with; what if we can prove all the Points of Christianity, and give uncontested Arguments for the Belief of them; yet we have no Religion, if our Souls never get *near to God* by them. A Saint thinks it a very melancholy thing when he is at a distance from God, and cannot tell God his Wants and Sorrows. Tho' he be never so much studied in Divinity, and the deep things of God, yet if God be not with him,
if

if he does not come near to his Mercy-Seat, so as to converse with him as his Friend, the Soul is concerned, and grieved, and never rests till this Distance be removed. 'Tis to little purpose that we get into Churches, join in the Fellowship of the Gospel, and attend many Seasons of Prayer: 'Tis to very little purpose to read Chapters, and to hear Sermons one Day after another: 'Tis to little purpose all these Forms are maintained, if we have not the Substance and Power of Godliness; if our God be not *near* us, if we never get *near to God*.

REFLECTION II.

How happy are we under the Gospel, above all Ages and Nations besides us, and before us! For we have Advantages of getting near to God, beyond what any other Religion has; above what the Heathen World ever enjoy'd; for their Light of Nature could never show them the Throne of Grace; above what the antient Patriarchs had, tho' God came down in visible Shapes, and revealed and discovered himself to them as a Man or an Angel: above what the Jews had, tho' God dwelt among them in visible Glory, in the Holy of Holies. The People were kept at a Distance, and the High Priests were to come thither but once a Year; and their Veil, and Smokes, and Shadows, did, as it were, conceal God from them, altho' they were Types of a fu-

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VI. *more Messiah*; and even their *Shekinah* it
self, or Cloud of Glory, gave them no spi-
ritual Idea or Notion of Godhead, tho' it
was a shining Emblem of God dwelling
among them.

We have better Ordinances, and brighter
Mediums of Converse with God; we have
more powerful Assistances to raise us hea-
venward; we have the *Messiah*, the *Emma-*
nuel; that is, *God in Flesh*, God come near
us, that we may get near to him: we have
the *Promise of the Spirit*, which is one of the
glorious Privileges of the Gospel; *Ephes. ii.*
v. 18. Ye who sometimes were afar off, are
made nigh thro' the Blood of Christ; and thro'
him we have Access by one Spirit to the Father.
Thro' *Christ Jesus*, and the Purchase of his
Blood, and the Working of his *Spirit*, we ap-
proach to the Father, we are brought near
to God.

And this very Method, (*viz.*) the Atone-
ment of the Blood of *Christ*, and the Work-
ing of the *Spirit*, by which we are brought
near to God in our first Conversion, are
the ways by which we must draw near him
in Duty ever afterward: it is by the same
Atonement, and by the same *Spirit*. We are
continually contracting fresh Guilt, and were
it not for the Perpetuity of the Virtue of
that Sacrifice, our Guilt would be an irre-
movable Bar against our coming near to God
daily and hourly; and after every new Sin,
were

were it not for that Spirit, we could never get near to God again: but that Spirit is promised to abide with us, *John* xiv. 16. and in *Heb.* iv. 14, 16. Christ is passed into the Heavens, is very near to God, and hath shown us the Way thither; *Heb.* x. 19, 20, Having therefore Boldness to enter into the Holiest by the Blood of Jesus, let us draw near with a true Heart, in full Assurance of Faith.

O how should we value our Acquaintance with Christ, and pray earnestly for his Spirit! one makes a way for our coming near to God, and the other actually brings us near. How glorious would Churches be, if there were more of this Spirit poured down upon us! When an Assembly of Saints, all joining together in one Act of Worship, shall at once rise by the same Spirit, and approach to the Mercy-Seat, and order their Cause before God; What might not such a worshipping Assembly obtain at the Hands of God? What Beauty would appear in the Worship of Christians then? What Glory would be found in a Society of Saints, if this Spirit were but there? Christianity has had these Ornaments, and these Honours: let us pray that God would restore them again.

REFLECTION III.

This Doctrine will not suffer us to confine our selves or others, meerly to a set prescribed Form

Serm. VI. *spread before God.* 191.

Form of Words in Prayer. For as the Cases and Concerns of Soul or Body, which we spread before God, are almost infinitely various, so must we express those Cases and Concerns before God in proper Words, and plead for Relief with a variety of Arguments, as the Spirit of God shall assist us: *I would order my own Cause before him, says the Lord, and my Mouth should be filled with Arguments.* 'Tis not possible that a *Prayer-Book* should be drawn up with Forms particularized to every Complaint, and every Sorrow, that a holy Soul wants to pour out, and spread before the Mercy-Seat. And the Christian, that knows the Pleasure of getting near to God in Prayer, cannot content himself to wrap up all his special and dearest Concernments in a few general Sentences.

"What! When I'm brought so nigh to my God, my almighty and compassionate Friend; when I am taken, as it were, by the Hand, and led into his secret Place; when I have the Ear of God so near me, shall I not tell him my secret and particular Grievances? When I feel such a sweet Freedom of Soul in his Presence, shall I not unbosom my whole Self to him? Shall I check the devout Appetites and Affections of my Heart, because I don't find Words in
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“ my *Prayer-Book* fit to express them? Shall
 “ I quench the blessed Spirit thus, and si-
 “ mit my Converse with God?”

I allow *Forms of Prayer*, well composed, to be useful Helps for younger or meaner Christians; or, indeed, for all Persons, when the Spirits are low and languishing, and the Heart in a heavy or cold Temper: but at such a glorious Season to confine a holy Soul to a few good Expressions, written down before, how great an Injury would it be to its Divine Pleasure and Profit?

REFLECTION IV.

How comfortable a Consideration may be drawn from my Discourse, by those that have ne’er a Friend upon Earth, that there is a Friend in Heaven, to whom they may tell all their Circumstances, and all their Sorrows! There are some Persons, in this World, so mean and so wretched, that they are ready to think, at least, that they have ne’er a Friend, and are apt to complain that they are altogether friendless. But there is a God, one that they may be sure is their everlasting Friend, when they are willing to enter into a State of Friendship with him: when they have commenced Friendship with him by the Blood of Jesus the Great Reconciler, and by the Working of the reconciling Spirit; then let them

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prove this Consideration with sweet Joy. They have a Friend in Heaven, before whom they can spread all their Sorrows, tho' they be friendless on Earth ; tho' they are forced to say of their Souls, " There is no Refuge for them in the World," yet they can say, *God is their Refuge* : They can express to him their various Sufferings, and their several Difficulties, and they can be sure of a Helper in Heaven.

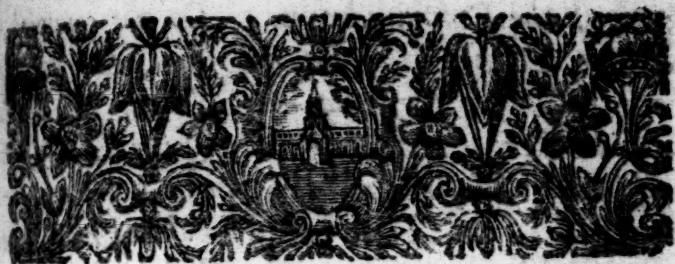
REFLECTION V.

Lastly, *That future State of Glory must be blessed indeed, where we shall be ever near to God, even to his Seat, and have no Sorrows to tell him of.* If it be so delightful a Thing to come near the Seat of God here upon Earth, to mourn before him, and to tell him all our Circumstances, and all our Sorrows ; how pleasurable a Blessedness must that of Heaven be, where we shall be ever rejoicing before him, as *Christ Jesus* was before the World was made, *rejoicing daily before him* ; and our Delight shall be with that God who created the Souls of Men : Where we shall be for ever telling him our Joys, and our Pleasures, with humble Adoration of his Grace, and everlasting Gratitude. 'Twill be a sweet redoubling of all the Delights and Enjoyments of Heaven, to tell him, in the Language of that World, what infinite Satisfaction we feel in his Society ; what Enjoyments and

Delights we derive from his immediate Influences ; how full our Hearts are of Love to him, and how full they are of the Sense of his Love : There his Love communicated to us, shall be, as it were, reflected back again from our Souls to God ; and in the perpetual Communications and Reflections of Knowledge, Joy, and Love, shall our Heaven consist.

O that I could raise your Souls, and mine, to blessed Breathings after this Felicity, by such Representations ! But how infinitely short must the brightest Descriptions fall of this State and Place ! May you and I, who speak and hear this, may every Soul of us be made thus happy one Day, and learn the Extent and Glory of this Blessedness, by sweet and everlasting Experience. *Amen.*





SERMON VII.

A Hopeful Youth falling short of
Heaven.

MARK X. 21.

Then Jesus beholding him, loved him.

The First Part.

IF we would know the Person who was favour'd with the Love of Jesus, and be acquainted with his Character, 'tis necessary to read the whole Narrative, as we find it deliver'd in this Chapter, from the 17th to the 23d Verse.

And when he was gone forth into the Way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit Eternal Life? 18. And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is

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none good, save one, that is God. 19. Thou knowest the Commandments; Do not commit Adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false Witness, Defraud not, Honour thy Father and Mother. 20. And he answer'd, and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my Youth. 21. Then Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One Thing thou lackest, go thy Way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the Poor, and thou shalt have Treasure in Heaven; and come, take up the Cross, and follow me. 22. And he was sad at that Saying, and went away grieved; for he had great Possessions. 23. And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his Disciples, How hardly shall they that have Riches enter into the Kingdom of God?

Now if we consult and compare the Account which the other Evangelists give us of this Transaction, we shall find that the Person was a young Man, Matt. xix. 20. and a Ruler among the Jews, Luke xviii. 18. He had some Concern upon his Mind about his Future State, and came to Christ, as to a Divine Prophet, to enquire the Way to Heaven: But 'tis evident, he had a vain Conceit of his own Righteousness, and at the same Time he had an excessive Love to Money; he would fain have been an Heir of Heaven, but he valued his Inheritance on Earth much more: He wish'd for the Love of God, but would enjoy and love this World too; and rather than renounce the pleasant Things of

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Serm. VII. *falling short of Heaven.* 197

his Life, he would quit his Pretences to a
Life to come; for he went away grieved and
full of Sadness, at the Direction which our
Saviour gave him, and would not venture the
Experiment. He forsook *Christ* and Heaven,
leaving great Possessions on Earth.

It is not necessary to our Purpose, to
know whether, in the following Years of his
Life, he was brought to Repentance and
Conversion, tho' it is most likely that he never
was; for if he loved his Estate and his Mo-
ney so well in his younger Years, that Vice
probably increased with his Age. Besides,
it stands in the History of the Gospel, as
an Example of those Men who lose Heaven
for the Love of Money. But howsoever it
might be afterward, this is certain, that at
that Time he was in the State of Sin and
Death; which is sufficient to my present
Design.

From the Words of my Text, set in this
light, and compared with the Issue of the
whole Conversation, between *Christ* and this
young Man, we may derive this Doctrine:

Doct. *Our Saviour had some Love for a Person
who preferred this World to Heaven, and neglect-
ed his Salvation.*

In Order to improve this Thought, we
shall consider,

- I. What is meant by the Love of our Saviour to this Young Man, and to Persons of his Character.
- II. What was there in him that might attract our Saviour's Love.
- III. What Remarks may be made upon the Sin and Folly of a Person so lovely, and so beloved of *Christ*.
- IV. Make an Address to three Sorts of Persons, taking the Occasion from the Character of the Person in my Text.

First, *What is meant by the Love of our Saviour to this young Man, and how far may he be said to love a Person who is void of true Grace, and neglects Salvation.*

Here, I conceive, we are not to look upon our Lord *Jesus Christ* as acting according to his *Divinity*, but only in his *Human Nature*; for it is evident that *Christ*, consider'd as *God*, loved him not in that Sense in which the *Love of God* is usually taken; for he had plain Evidences of a worldly covetous Mind, and so could not be the Object of special Divine Complacency: Nor do we find that *Christ* loved him so well, as to communicate Divine Grace and Salvation to him.

I confess there may be some Sort of Love attributed to God, with Relation to Creatures of any Kind, which have any Thing valuable in them: So God loves all the

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Works of his Hands; so he loves the Heavens and the Earth, and all the Pieces of inanimate Nature; that is, he approves his own Workmanship, the Effects of his own Wisdom and Power. God is also sometimes said to love those to whom he communicates Temporal Blessings, or makes the Offer of Eternal Ones. So he loved the whole Nation of the *Jews*, tho' he did not give all of them his saving Grace. But still it is much more natural to expound the Words of my Text concerning *Christ* as Man; for there were some peculiar Qualities in this Youth, which were suited to attract the Love of *Human Nature*; such Qualities as a wise and perfect Man could not but love: 'Twas some such Sort of Love as our Lord expressed toward the Apostle *John*, in a Way of Distinction from the rest; upon which Account, probably, he was called, *The Disciple whom Jesus loved*, John xiii. 23. Therefore I conceive *Christ* is here represented as exerting the innocent and kind Affections of *Human Nature* towards a Youth so agreeable and hopeful.

Now this *Love* implies in it these five Things:

1st, *A hearty Approbation of those good Qualities which Christ beheld in him*: For he being perfect and wise, cannot but approve that which is excellent. He had a sharp Eye,

and great Sagacity of Nature : With a ready Penetration he could discern what was valuable ; and must necessarily have a just Esteem for every Thing wherein his Father's Wisdom and Power did eminently appear. Whatsoever God created at first, *was good*, *Gen. i. 31.* And whatsoever remains of that good Workmanship of God, *Christ*, the Son of God, approved still, so far as it was untainted with Sin, and consider'd in it self, abstracted from the criminal Qualities that might attend it.

2dly, This Love of *Christ* to the Young-Man, implies a Complacency in his Person ; a Sort of human Delight in a Fellow-Creature that had several excellent Properties ; tho' the Love of God, and powerful Religion, were wanting. If I read a Book that has much good Sense in it, and where the Reasonings are well connected, I cannot but have a Delight in Reading, tho' the Subject itself may be trifling, or the Theme disagreeable. If I hear an Oration well compos'd, with many ingenious Turns of Thought, and pathetick Expressions ; and all these pronounced with the various Decencies of Speech and Gesture, I take Pleasure in the Performance, and may love the Orator, tho' he insist upon Sentiments quite contrary to my own : So I may be pleased with the learned Conversation of a knowing and well-temper'd Man, and love him so far,

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erm. VII. *falling short of Heaven.* 201

tho' he may be my Enemy, and perhaps, in
his Heart, an Enemy to God too ; for such
as this Young Man, an Idolater of Gold,
and therefore *an Enemy to God*, Jam. iv. 4.
concerning whom it is written, that *Jesus*
loved him.

ally, *Some natural good Wishes for his Wel-*
are implied in this Love. There is in
every wise and good Man, a hearty Desire
of the Happiness of his Fellow-Creatures,
he loves them all in this Sense, even the
Foolish and the Wicked. Human Nature,
that has any Goodness in it, is ready to wish
well to any Person, tho' he be an utter Stran-
ger, and unknown ; especially if he has some
agreeable Qualities. There may be an inno-
cent Inclination to see all Men happy, tho'
we know this shall not be brought to pass ;
the Word of God declares that the most
part of Men walk in the Broad-way, and
shall go down to Hell. You know how pas-
sionately *St. Paul* longed for the Salvation of
his Countrymen the *Jews*. This is called
Love of *Benevolence* ; and 'tis evident by the
following Particulars, that the Lord express'd
his Good-Will towards the Young Man in
the Text.

ally, *A conferring of actual Benefit or Kind-*
is implied in the Love of *Christ* towards
this Youth ; for he stood still, and entertain'd
him with friendly Discourse : He endea-
our'd by proper Methods to convince him

of Sin ; he gave him Direction what he should do to obtain Treasure in Heaven ; he called him to be his Disciple and Follower ; and gave him a Promise of everlasting Riches, if he would have comply'd with his Proposal. This is called a *Love of Beneficence* ; and this our Lord Jesus practised abundantly, even to those whom he did not savingly enlighten and convert by his Gospel ; for 'twas his Character, that *he went about doing good*, Acts x. 38.

5thly, This Love of Christ includes in it *Compassion for the Young Man*, and some Degree of Sorrow to think that he should miss of Heaven ; that he should be so harden'd in Self-Confidence, so puffed up with a Conceit of his own Righteousness, and so hard to be convinced of his Weakness and Guilt, as to stand to it boldly, that he had kept all the Commandments of God ; and at last, that he should be so entangled with a Love to Money, as to despise the Treasures of Heaven, and to let Christ and Salvation go.

Such a mournful Pity did our Lord express to Jerusalem, in the Days of his Flesh ; *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killest the Prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee : How often would I have gathered thy Children, as a Hen doth her Brood under her Wings, and ye would not !* Luke xiii. 34. And he mingled the Tears of Love and Sorrow when he came near the Gates : For the same Evangelist tells

Serm. VII. *falling short of Heaven.* 203

us, that he beheld the City, and wept over it, with this melting Language, *If thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy Day, the Things that belong to thy Peace; but now they are hid from thine Eyes; Luke xix. 41, 42.*

When we behold a noble Palace, a well-conceived Garden, a Piece of Painting of uncommon Art: " 'Tis Pity (we cry) that such a Building should be reduced to Ashes, such a Garden overspread with Defolation and Disorder, or such a Picture be all defaced." We have a Sort of Pity for these inanimate Beauties, and we are ready to mourn their Danger or Ruin. And the Passion is innocent and becoming: But the Grief and the Love rise higher still, when we see a living Soul, a Fellow-Creature of our own Rank, a Man or Woman dress'd in agreeable Accomplishments, and yet making Haste to wilful Destruction. Such Love and such Grief are comely for a wise and good Man; and they became our Saviour well. Blessed Saviour! that ever thy Love should lay it self out on such Objects, as would awaken thy Grief, and give thee so painful a Compassion! But this was only *in the Days of his Flesh*: He visits Mankind now under their various Wretchedness and Folly, yet we cannot suppose his present Exaltation and Blessedness does indulge real Sorrow, or admit any smarting Affliction; tho' in his humbled State on Earth, his human Love expressed it self

self agreeably in such mournful Compassion and Tenderneſs.

II. We come to conſider, *What there was in this Perſon that might attract our Saviour's Love.*

1^{ſt}, He had probably *ſome natural Qualifications, which were agreeable and pleaſing.* His Youth is expreſſed, *Mat. xix. 20. A young Man, in the Prime of his Days, in the Force and Flower of his Age, the Beauty and Vigour of his Nature:* And 'tis very likely, that he might be of a comely Figure and ingenious Countenance; for, 'tis ſaid, *our Saviour beholding him, loved him.* He fixed his Eyes, and probably ſaw ſomething in him delightful in his very Aſpect and Appearance, which might partly induce him to thoſe various Expreſſions of Love before-mentioned, and to pity ſo lovely a Youth, who was enſlav'd to Riches, and bound to Deſtruction in Fetters of Gold.

2^{dly}, *He had a courteous and obliging Carriage, which appears in ſeveral Inſtances; (viz.) He kneeled before our Lord, and paid him great Reſpect with the Geſture of his Body; he ſaluted him, Good Maſter!* which our Lord did not reprove, when he ſaid, *There is none good but God;* but put him to the Tryal, whether he would own him to be God or no. He acknowledged *Chriſt* as his Superiour, tho' he was ſo much a Stranger

to him, and so much a poorer Man than himself. By his whole Deportment we find him a Person of great Civility; he knew how to pay the Honours of his Country well, to give Titles to whom Titles are due, and to do these Things gracefully. A courteous, humble, and decent Behaviour, without Affectation or Flattery, is so far from being reproved by *Christ*, that not only in this Place, our Lord seems to be pleased with it, but in many Places of the New Testament, 'tis recommended to make Christianity amiable: 'Tis pleasing to human Nature, and cannot but gain Love and Esteem with all wise and vertuous persons.

zally, He was religiously educated even from his Childhood, and had grown up in Sobriety, perhaps, from his very Cradle; for he was not a young Man when he came to our Lord, and yet he says, concerning the Commandments of Moral Duty, *I have kept them all from my Youth.* He sprung purely from good Parents, he had such Instructions from them, and they such a jealous and watchful Eye over him, that he was kept from gross Sins, and was brought up in all the Forms of Godliness, and in the Observance of the Moral Law. Now *Christ*, considered meerly as Man, loved the Law of God so well, that he could not but take Pleasure in a Person that performed it,

it, so far as that Obedience reached. Virtue, in the meer outward Part of it, will command Respect even from the Vile and the Wicked ; much more will the good and pious Man pay Honour to the Practice of it. There is something amiable in Sobriety, Temperance, Charity, Justice, Truth, and Sincerity, tho' they may not proceed from the divinest Principle of Love to God rooted in the Heart.

4thly, *He had given some Diligence in seeking after eternal Life, and had a great Concern about his Soul.* He came running to ask a Question of the biggest Importance, *What shall I do to inherit eternal Life?* He was convinced there was a Heaven and a Hell, and he was willing to do something here to obtain Happiness hereafter. He did not come with a Design to put curious and ensnaring Questions, as the Sadducees did, *Mat. xxii. 23.* but he seems to have an honest Design to know the Way to Heaven and Happiness, for he went away sorrowful when he could not comply with the Demands of *Christ*. Tho' he thought he had practised a great deal of Religion, yet he was willing to receive further Instructions ; *What lack I yet?* Is there any other Precept to be performed, in Order to entitle me to Life eternal? Now our Saviour loves to see Conscience awakened, to see the Springs of Religion opened and beginning

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ing to flow: A divine Teacher conceives
some Hope of a Man that is willing to be
taught, and ready to learn, and therefore he
loves him. This Youth thought himself
ingenious, yet he did not think himself *all-wise*;
and therefore submits to farther Instructions.
Now 'tis a Pleasure to communicate Know-
ledge to those that long to receive it; and we
try them heartily when they don't comply
with the necessary Duties that are revealed to
them, through the Charms of some strong
temptation.

sibly, Add to all this, that *he had many Ci-
vil Advantages by Reason of his Riches, his Au-
thority, and Power.* He was wealthy, and
was a Ruler among the People; which
Things, tho' they cannot in themselves make
any Person amiable, yet when they are ad-
ded to the former good Qualities, they ren-
der them all more lovely and more valua-
ble; and that because they are so seldom
joined together. Dr. Goodman remarks very
ingeniously here, "That his Concern about
his Soul, was not a Sick-bed Medita-
tion, for he was in Health: nor a me-
lancholy Qualm of old Age, for he was
Young: nor was it the Effect of his
being discontented and out of Humour
with the World, for he was Rich and
Prosperous." 'Tis seldom that we see a
Man in the Prime of his Days, possessing
large Treasures and Dominions in this
World,

World, that will seek after the Things of another ; or that will show due Respect to his Fellow-Creatures, or practise so much as the Form of Godliness : that when all these meet together, as they did in this Young-Man, they conspire to make him lovely in the Eyes of every Beholder.

But alas ! this unhappy Youth, furnished, as he was, with all these Vertues, and these Advantages, which our Lord beheld in him, and for which he loved him, yet he lost Heaven for the Love of this World. He refus'd to accept the Proposals of *Christ* ; he went away sorrowful, for he had large Possessions. And this naturally leads me to the Third Head.

III. *Some Remarks upon this mixed Character ; upon the Folly, the Guilt, and Misery of a Man so lovely, and so beloved of Christ.*

1st Remark, *How much Good and Evil may be mingled in the same Person ?* What lovely Qualities were found in this Young-Man ! and yet there was found in him a carnal Mind in love with this World, and in a State of secret Enmity to God. Our Nature at first was a glorious Composition of all that was good. How has Sin ruined Human Nature from its primitive Glory, and mingled a large Measure of Evil in its very Frame ! And yet how has restraining Grace kept our Nature from losing every Thing

ing that is good and valuable, and from
coming universally monstrous and loath-
some!

Let us take a Survey of the World, and
what a Mixture there is of amiable and
useful Qualities amongst the Children of
Men. There is Beauty and Comeliness;
there is Vigour and Vivacity; there is
good-Humour and Compassion; there is
Reason, and Judgment, and Industry, even
amongst those that are profligate, and
abandoned to many Vices. There is So-
berness, and Love, and Honesty, and Ju-
stice, and Decency amongst Men that know
God, and believe not the Gospel of
Lord *Jesus*. There are very few of
the Sons or Daughters of *Adam*, but are
possessed of something good and agreeable,
either by Nature or Acquirement; there-
fore, when there is a necessary Occasion to
mention the Vices of any Man, I should
not speak Evil of him in the gross, nor
heap Reproaches on him by whole-sale.
It is very disingenious to talk Scandal in
comparatives, as though every Man who was
worse than a perfect Villain, the very
worst of Men, all over hateful and abomi-
nable.

How sharply should our own Thoughts
reprove us, when we give our Pride and
Licence a Loose, to ravage over all the Cha-
racter of our Neighbours, and deny all
that

that is good concerning them, because they have something in them that is criminal and worthy of Blame! Thus our Judgment is abused by our Passions; and sometimes this Folly reigns in us to such a Degree, that we can hardly allow a Man to be wise or ingenious, to have a Grain of good Sense, or good Humour, that is not of our Profession, or our Party, in Matters of Church or State. Let us look back upon our Conduct, and blush to think that we should indulge such Prejudices, such a sinful Partiality.

2d Remark. *A Man that has not true Grace, nor Holiness, may be the just Object of our Love;* for we find several Instances and several Degrees of Love were paid by *Christ*, the wisest and best of Men, to a Youth of a covetous and carnal Temper; one who preferred Earth to Heaven, and valued his present Possessions, above those Eternal Treasures that *Christ* had promised him.

I confess, under the Old Testament, in the 139th Psalm, verse 21. *David* appeals to God, *Do I not hate them that hate thee?* and adds, *I hate them with perfect Hatred.* But this need not be construed to signify any Malice in his Heart against them as a private Person; but his Design to fight against them, and suppress them, as a Soldier, and a King, because they appeared pub-

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publickly against God: for he adds, *I am grieved at those that rise up against thee, I count them mine Enemies.* Besides, these Persons were of so abandon'd a Character, that they seem to have nothing good in them; and he might justly hate them, considered meerly as Sinners, in the same Sense that we must hate our selves, so far as we are sinful. I might add to all this, that they were cruel and bloody with regard to Men, and they spoke wickedly against God, and were God's profest Enemies, *verse 19, and 20.* After all, 'twas much more allowable in David the Jew, in the Heat of his Zeal, to talk thus, than it can be for us Christians; while we read the Words of our Saviour, *Matth. v. 43, 44, 45.* *We have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour, and hate thine Enemy: But I say unto you, Love your Enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you: That ye may be the Children of your Father which is in Heaven; for he maketh his Sun to rise on the Evil and on the Good, and sendeth Rain on the Just and on the Unjust: While we consider also in what a divine Manner our Lord Jesus has exemplified his own Precept, and has loved many of his Enemies, so as to die for them; and manifested so much natural Affection, even for the Young Sinner in my Text,*
because

because there were some good Qualities found in him.

I will not say therefore within my self concerning any Man, "I hate him utterly, "and abhor him in all Respects, because he "has not true Holiness:" but I will look upon him, and consider whether there may not be some Accomplishment in him, some moral Vertue, some valuable Talent, some natural or acquired Excellency; and I will not neglect to pay due Esteem to every deserving Quality, wheresoever I find it. 'Tis a Piece of Honour due to God our Creator, to observe the various Signatures of his Wisdom that he has impressed upon his Creatures, and the overflowing Treasures of his Goodness, which he has distributed among the Works of his Hands.

Thus I may very justly love a Man, for whom, in the vulgar Sense, I have no Charity; that is, such a one as I believe to be in a State of Sin and Death, and have no present Hope of his Salvation. How could holy Parents fulfil their Duties of Affection to their wicked Children? or pious Children pay due Respect to sinful Parents? How could a Believer fulfil the Law of Love to an unbelieving Brother, or a dearer Relative, if we ought to admit of no Love to Persons that are in a State of Enmity to God? How can we be *Followers of God as dear Children*, if we are not

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kind to the *Unthankful*, and to the *Evil*? Luke vi. 37. To those who have nothing of serious Religion in them? *Gal. vi. 10.* As we have Opportunity, let us do good to all Men, especially to them who are of the Household of Faith.

As God has a peculiar Love for his own Children, for those who are renewed, and sanctified, and formed into his Likeness; so ought we to love all the Saints with a peculiar kind of Affection, and take special delight in them: we should express a Love of intimate Fellowship unto them; a Love of Divine Friendship, of spiritual Pleasure, and hearty Communion; rejoicing together with them in God our common Father, in Christ Jesus our common Head, and in the Hope of our common Salvation; and we should ever be ready, in the first Place, to assist and support them, and supply their Wants according to the Calls of Providence. But Sinners also must have some Share in our Love.

3d Remark. *How different is the special Love of God, from the natural Love of Man?* God seeth not as Man seeth; he appoints not Persons to eternal Life, because of some agreeable Accomplishments which they possess in this Life. Jesus Christ himself, consider'd as God, did not bestow his special and saving Love upon that young *Israelite*, whom, as Man, he could not help loving. So Samuel was sent to chuse a King for the *Jews*, among the

the Sons of Jesse, *1 Sam. xvi. 6.* When he saw *Eliab* appear, he look'd on him, and said, *Surely the Lord's Anointed is before him*; but the Lord said to *Samuel*, ver. 7. *Look not on his Countenance, or on the Height of his Stature, because I have refused him.* Old *Jesse* (it may be) was ready to look upon his eldest Son too, being pleased with his tall and comely Figure, and to say within himself, "'Tis pity that *Eliab* was not made a King." But *David* was God's Beloved.

If the Question were put to us, Who are the Persons that are fit to stand in the Courts of God above, to be the Inhabitants and Ornaments of Heaven? We should be ready to say, The Beautiful and the Ingenious, the Souls of a sweet Disposition, and the Persons of graceful Behaviour. We are tempted to think that the Well-born, the Wise, the Affable, and the Well-accomplish'd, should all be made Saints, and the Favourites of God: but he sees with other Eyes, he determines his special Love by other Principles, and makes another Sort of Distinction by his sovereign saving Grace, unguided and unallured by the Merit of Man. *1 Cor. i. 26, 27, 28, 29.* *To see your Calling, Brethren, how that not many wise Men after the Flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish Things of the World, to confound the Wise; and God hath chosen the weak Things of the World,*

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to confound the Things which are mighty ; and base Things of the World, and Things which are despised, hath God chosen ; yea, and Things which are not, to bring to nought Things that are, that no Flesh should glory in his Presence.

What would become of the morose, the rough natural Tempers, if God loved none but such as were lovely in our Eyes ? What would become of all the deformed and the uncomely Pieces of Human Nature ; the clownish, and the weak, and base Things of this World, if God should chuse none but the fair, and the well-bred, the well-figured, and the honourable ? If this were the Rule of his Conduct, what dismal Distinction would light upon Thousands, and some good Men too, who must wear in their Faces, in this World, the dreadful Sentence of their Damnation in the next ? But the great and sovereign God acts by other Measures ; he lays down to himself Divine Rules, that are to us unknown, and must be for ever unsearchable.

Some, who are endowed with native Excellencies, he adorns with heavenly Graces, and they shine as Jewels set in Rings of Gold : Others, who have scarce any Thing in them amiable by Nature, are the Objects of Divine Love, and made Vessels of Grace ; tho' these do never make so charming an Appearance among Men. *Moses* the meek and obliging, *Jonah* the rough and the peevish.

vish, were both beloved of God ; for he made Saints and Prophets of them. *Abraham* the rich, and *Sarah* the beautiful ; *Peter* the poor Fisherman, and *Paul* the Man of mean Aspect, and contemptible Figure ; were all beloved of God, and made Heirs of Eternal Life. The Conduct of the great God, in this Matter, is so various, and his Reasons so sublime and impenetrable, that 'tis in vain for us to attempt to trace out his Rules of Action.

Sometimes he chuses a Man of great intellectual Powers, and sets an invisible Mark of Divine Love upon him : At another Time he takes Pleasure to pour Contempt on all the Pride of Human Reason, by chusing a foolish Man, and making him an humble Believer. Sometimes he exalts the Man of natural Vertue into a Saint, and again, he spreads Shame and Confusion over all our own pretended Righteousnesses and vain Confidence, by culling out, here and there, a profane Wretch, and converting him to Faith and Holiness ; and in the mean Time he leaves some that are sober, and have many human Vertues, and good Appearances, to perish with the Pharisee and the Hypocrite for ever, in their Pride and Self-Righteousness. *Jesus*, the Man, look'd upon this pretty Youth that was well-born, sober, and vertuous, and he loved him ; but the Eternal God chose him not for a Saint, for he

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he suffer'd him to run madding after his many Possessions, and to despise Heaven. Here it becomes us to be silent and adore. O the Depths of Divine Counsel! O the awful and glorious Sovereignty of the Grace of God, that could pass by so desirable a Person, whom the Man *Jesus* could not look upon without Pity and Love! *How unsearchable are his Ways, and his Judgments past finding out!* Rom. xi. 33.

Now though this be a very painful and tremendous Meditation, yet there's an excellent Use to be made of it. No Man should despair of Salvation, and the Love of God, how mean and despicable soever his Appearance be among Men, or how remote soever from all that we call *lovely*. Let him forsake all Sin, and be happy for ever. Nor should the most amiable of Creatures, in the natural or civil World, flatter themselves that they are upon that Account beloved of God, and shall certainly be Partakers of eternal Blessings in the World of Glory. Let them follow *Christ*, and be saved.

But I would dwell upon this last Thought a little, and therefore I shall propose my *Fourth Remark* in this Manner.

4th Remark. *Many lovely Accomplishments, join'd together, will not carry a natural Man to Heaven.* The finest Composition of Beauty and Youth, Strength and Riches, and all this unbelish'd with many Forms of Godliness,
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and some shining outward Vertues, will not obtain eternal Life. The Man that's thus qualified and adorned, if he prefers Earth to Heaven, and loves the Possessions of this World, above spiritual Treasures, abides in a State of Condemnation and Death. Grace is not a Flower that grows in the Field of Nature, nor is it made by the Art of Man; 'tis a divine Seed; 'tis planted in our Hearts by the Spirit of God. *John i. 13.* The Saints *are born not of Blood*; that is, by natural Generation: *nor of the Will of the Flesh*; that is, by our own Powers of Nature: *nor of the Will of Man*; that is, by the Influence that others have over us: *but of God.*

A Man may set himself to work a while for the Good of his Soul, and yet may miss of Salvation: *Strait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way that leads to Life, and few there be that find it, Matth. vii. 14.* And *many which seek to enter in, shall not be able, Luke xiii. 24.* They seek, but not with all their Might: they are not willing to forsake all for Heaven, and therefore they obtain it not: they seek, perhaps, with Diligence for a Season, and give out before they have attained; they tire, and grow weary, and lose the Prize: they seek, but not in God's appointed Way, and according to the Rules of the Gospel; and no Wonder if their Labour be vain; *for he that striveth is not crown'd, except he strive lawfully, 2 Tim. ii. 5.* And this was the

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the Case of the rich Young-Man ; he sought eternal Life, but not with all his Soul, for he could not take up his Cross and follow Christ : he sought the Kingdom of God, for a Season ; but when he came to the hard Work of Self-denial, he would not venture into that thorny Path, but turned back, and went away sorrowful. He sought Justification and Peace with God, but not in a right way ; for being ignorant of God's Righteousness, and going about to establish his own, he fell short of the Righteousness of God, and attained it not, Rom. x. 3. He loved Heaven well, but he loved this Earth better : he chose his Portion and Happiness in this World, and lost his Soul.

The Eye of God, our Judge, is sharp and severe ; he sees the hidden Vices of the Mind, thro' all the fairest Vails of Nature, and the brightest Dress of outward Vertue. We may cheat others with the Disguises of Religion, and allure the Love of the best of Christians : we may cheat our selves by these fair Appearances, and entertain a fond Opinion of our own Saintship ; but the great God can never be imposed upon at this rate. He knows well what is lovely and excellent in his Creatures ; but when he seats himself upon his Throne of Judgment, all their shining Ornaments of Body and Mind are blemish'd, are darken'd, are lost in his Eyes, if he discovers a secret Love to Sin in the Heart. Where the Love of this World prevails it

over-ballances all other good Qualities, tho' ever so valuable in themselves ; and tho' they may create Love in every Beholder, yet the Love of God is not to be purchased, nor persuaded, contrary to his own settled and eternal Rules of Judgment. *If any Man love this World, the Love of the Father is not in him,* 1 John ii. 15. nor does the Father love him. The Prince of Devils has many noble Endowments, and intellectual Glories ; the natural Powers of an Angel remain still with him ; but his inward Enmity to God, confines him for ever to Hell : and in the Sense of the Apostle James, *Whosoever will be a Friend to the World, is the Enemy of God,* James iv. 4. tho' in many other Excellencies he might be a Fellow for Angels.

Wise and happy is that Soul who fears to build his Hopes of Heaven upon the Sand, upon a shining but feeble Foundation. Wise and happy is he who does not mistake the Glories of Nature for divine Grace ; who does not satisfy himself to seek a little after Heaven, but resolves to find it, and parts with all for the Knowledge and the Love of Christ. While others, who pretend to much Wisdom, raise their vain Expectations of Happiness, upon a few natural Accomplishments, and devout Wishes, this Man pursues the Work upon diviner Principles, and brings it to Perfection : and when others, at the great Day of Decision, meet with Shame
and

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and terrible Disappointment, he shall be applauded, in the Face of Angels, as the only wise Man, and shall find himself for ever happy.

The 5th, and last Remark, is this; *How dangerous a Snare is great Riches!* They become a fore Temptation (even to Persons well-inclined) to tie their Souls fast to this World, and persuade them to neglect God, and *Christ*, and Heaven. This was the Case of the Young-Man in my Text; *he went away* from our Lord melancholy and grieved, that he could not join *Christ* and the World together; *he had great Possessions*, and therefore he refused to be a Follower of *Christ*, under the poor and mean Circumstances of his Appearance among Men; see *Verse* the 22d, 23d. And our Lord himself makes this same Remark, *How hardly shall they that have Riches enter into the Kingdom of God?* that is, as he explains it in the following Verse, because 'tis so hard, for those who possess great Riches, not to love them too well, and to trust in them as their chief Good.

How many lovely Qualities are here spoiled at once, by the Love of this World! and a Man that was not far from the Kingdom of God, divided from *Christ*, and driven to a fatal Distance from Heaven, by this dangerous interposing Snare! A wretched Chain, tho' 'twas a golden one, that withheld his Soul from the Embraces of his Saviour. He

was young, he was modest and humble, he had a Desire to be saved, and he went far in the outward Forms of Godliness; *all these* Commands, said he, *have I kept from my Youth*, or Childhood; and he had a Mind to follow *Christ* too: but *Jesus* was poor, and his Followers must *take up their Cross*, and share in his Poverty. This was the parting Point; this was the Bar to his Salvation: he was *almost a Christian*, but his Riches prevented him from being *altogether so*. O fatal Wealth, and foolish Possessor!

It became our blessed Lord, the Heir of all Things, to divest himself of Wealth and Grandeur, and to renounce all the Pomp and glittering Equipage of this World, when he came to introduce a Religion so spiritual, and so refined, as the Gospel was: and it became him to put such a Test as this, to such as pretended to be his Disciples; Whether they durst venture to exchange the present World, and the visible Enjoyments of it, for Glories future and invisible? 'Twas proper he should try whether they could deny themselves, and become poor for his sake, who made himself poor for their sakes, and promised them unknown Treasures in Heaven. But the Test proved too severe, and the Gate too strait for this Young-Man, with all the Bulk of his Estate to enter in at it.

Well might the Apostle teach *Timothy*, the young Preacher, to *charge them that are rich*

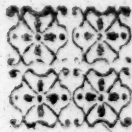
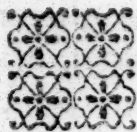
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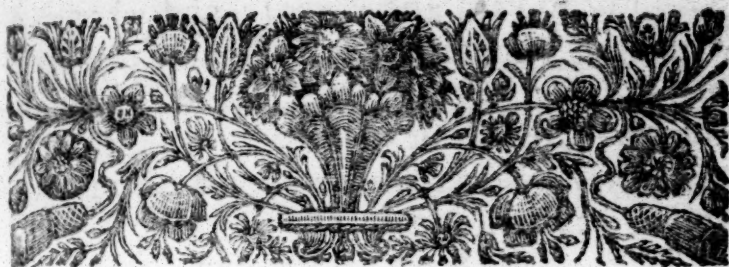
in this World, not to trust in uncertain Riches, but to do good to the Poor, to distribute to the Needy, that they might lay up in Store for themselves a good Foundation against the Time to come, 1 Tim. vi. 17, &c. because Men are so ready to think that a Store of Gold is a good Foundation to trust in for Happiness here, and forget hereafter. Well might he admonish them to lay hold on eternal Life, because they are so ready to hold their Money fast, though they let eternal Life go. They that have much, are often greedy of more, and thereby fall into Temptations and Snares, into many foolish and hurtful Lusts, that drown Men in Perdition: for the Love of Money is the Root of all Evil; which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the Faith, have forsaken Christ, and pierced themselves through with many Sorrows, ver. 9, 10.

Shall I take Occasion here to put the Rich in mind of their Danger, and intreat them to watch against the shining Allurement that besets them around? Have a Care lest your Eyes be dazzled with this glittering World, and blinded to the Gospel of Christ: and shall I comfort the Poor, by telling them their Privilege, how much more free they are from this golden Snare? You have been used to Meanness and Poverty, therefore we may hope that the Plainness and Simplicity of the Gospel will not offend you; that the Doctrine of the Cross, and the Poverty of

the Man of *Nazareth*, who hung upon it for your sakes, will not be a Scandal to your Thoughts, nor a Bar to your Faith. In the Days of *Christ*, the *Poor* received the Gospel; and not many Rich, not many Mighty, have in any Age been the Followers of a despised *Jesus*.

O may the Rich in this Assembly be led by divine Grace to break through all their Temptations, and attend their Saviour, tho' his Name, and his Disciples here on Earth, be surrounded with all the Forms of Contempt and Poverty! And may the meaner Hearers improve their Advantage, and take up their Cross, and follow their Lord, till they are all joined to the glorious Assembly above, and made Possessors of everlasting Riches! *Amen.*





SERMON VIII.

A Hopeful Youth falling short of
Heaven.

MARK X. 21.

Then Jesus beholding him, loved him.

The Second Part.

WHEN our Saviour dwelt upon Earth, he found a Young Man in the Coasts of *Judea*, that preferred the Riches of this World to all the Treasures of Heaven; and yet *Jesus* cast an Eye of Love upon him.

In the foregoing *Discourse* upon these Words, it has been considered what Sort of Love *Christ* could show to a Man, whose
L s Soul

Soul was so vain and carnal ; and what good Qualities appeared in this Youth, that could engage the Love of our Saviour, notwithstanding the Guilt of his Covetousness ; and some *Remarks* were made upon a Man so lovely, and so beloved of *Christ*.

First, The Love which our Saviour manifested to this Person, was not properly a *Divine Love*, for that would have changed his Nature, and refined his carnal Desires, and conferred Grace and Salvation upon him : We must understand it therefore only in this Sense, That the Affections of his *Human Nature* were drawn out towards something that was valuable and excellent in this young *Israelite* : He approved of those Accomplishments which he beheld in him, and felt a Sort of Complacency in his Person and Character. He had an innocent and human Desire of his Welfare, he gave him Divine Instructions for this End, and pitied him heartily that he was so far gone in the Love of the World, as to neglect the Offer of Heaven.

Secondly, The Qualities which might attract our Saviour's Love, were such as these : He was young and *sprightly*, and 'twas probable that he had something very agreeable in his Aspect : His Carriage was *courteous and obliging*, for he kneeled before our Lord, and saluted him with much Civility : He had a *religious Education*, much outward *Sobriety*

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briety and Vertue, so that he was ready to think himself a compleat Saint. *All these Commands* (says he) *have I kept from my Youth*; yet he was willing to receive further Instructions, if any Thing else were necessary, in Order to eternal Life. Add to all this, that he was *rich and powerful*, he was a *Ruler among the Jews*, and had large Possessions, which made his Humility and other Vertues appear the more amiable, because they are so seldom found in Persons of an exalted Station.

Thirdly, The Remarks that were made upon a Person that had so many good Qualities, and yet missed of Heaven, might instruct us not to disclaim any Thing that is worthy and excellent, tho' 'tis mingled with much Iniquity; but to pay Respect and Love, as our Lord *Jesus* did, to Persons that have any Thing valuable in them, tho' their Vertues are imperfect, and fall short of saving Grace. We may learn also, that God chuses not as Man would chuse, nor saves all those that a wise and good Man may well bestow his Love upon. We are taught further, that many lovely Accomplishments, joined together, are not sufficient to attain eternal Life, unless we renounce this World, and follow *Christ*; and we are divinely warned of the Danger of Riches, how great a Snare they sometimes prove to Persons of a hopeful Character.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, We proceed now to the last Thing proposed ; and that is, to make an *Address to three Sorts of Persons*, taking the Occasion from the Character in my Text.

I. Those who have any Thing lovely or excellent in them, but, thro' the Power of a carnal Mind, are kept at a Distance from God, and have no Title to Heaven ; *such are beloved of Men, but not beloved of God.*

II. Those who are weaned, in some good Measure, from this World, and have Treasures in Heaven, but are defective in those Qualities that might render them amiable on Earth ; *such are beloved of God, but not of Men.*

III. Those that are furnished with every good Quality, and every Grace, *that are the Objects of the special Love of God, and almost every Man loves them too.*

I. Let me address my self to *those who have any Thing lovely or excellent in them, but thro' the Power of a carnal Mind are kept at a Distance from God, and have no Title to Heaven.* Such was the Young Man in the Gospel ; and according to the several good Qualities that he possessed, I shall divide my Exhortation to several Persons.

1st, *To such as are endowed with any natural Excellencies of Body or Mind.* Youth and Beauty, Strength and Health, Wit and Reason,

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Reason, Judgment, Memory, or sweet Disposition ; all these are the Gifts of God in the World of Nature, and render Persons so far amiable as they are possess'd of them. You that *flourish in the Vigour and Glory of Youth*, and yet have no saving Acquaintance with God in *Christ*, no Right to Eternal Life ; while I behold you, I would mourn over you with much Compassion. What Pity 'tis that the Flower of your Age should be employ'd only to sooth your Vanity ! to adorn your guilty Passions, and to dress up the Scenes of Sin ! That Flower will wither in Old Age, and it leaves no Perfume behind, but what arises from Vertue and Goodness ; or, perhaps, you will give it up to untimely Decay ; by Indulgence of irregular Pleasures, you devote it to be blasted by the Breath of *Satan*, and in the Smoak of Hell. But is it not Pity, that a strong and healthy Constitution should be wasted in Slavery to your Appetites, and in making Provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the Lusts of it ? Why should not the Powers of Nature, in their first Bloom and Glory, adorn the Kingdom of Grace ? Why should not our sprightly Days, and the warmest Hours of Life, be employed in some useful Activity for the Interest of God ? What a Decency and Honour is added to Religion, by its fairest and youngest Votaries ? With what peculiar Praises does the Word
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of God recommend the Character of youthful Piety. How is the young King *Josiah* celebrated in the sacred Records? that while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his Father, &c. 2 Chron. xxxiv. 3. How is *Timothy* commended, who had known the Holy Scriptures from his very Childhood, 2 Tim. iii. 15. And there are some young in Years, to whom the Apostle *John* might address himself with the same Pleasure as he does to the Christian Converts, whom he calls *Young Men*, strong in Grace, who had the Love of God abiding in them, and had overcome the Wicked One; 1 John ii. 14. And he gives 'em in the next Verse a most needful and friendly Caution against the Love of this World, and the Things of it, lest they shut the Love of the Father out of their Hearts. What an Abuse and Waste of Life are ye guilty of, when ye lay out the brightest Moments of it upon the Works of Darknes? and treasure up to your selves Everlasting Darknes and Fire?

I pity the young, the vigorous, the comely Figures of Human Nature, that neglect to seek after Divine Grace, that are ruined and made wretched to all Eternity, by their excessive Love of the Pleasures, or the Pomp, or the Riches of this vain World. A thousand such Sinners that were once the Hope of their Families, and the lovely Ornaments

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ments of the Place they lived in, are now cursing the Day of their Birth, and raging with Despair in the Midst of the Wrath of God.

Let me speak a Word also to *those that have rich Endowments of Mind.* Where we behold a sprightly Genius, solid Reason, and deep Judgment, we can't forbear loving the Possessors of them : We cannot forbear to say, " 'Tis Pity that so much Wit should " be abused to ridicule Religion, and do " Honour to foul Iniquity ; that it should " be enslaved to all the Arts of Lewdness, " and dress up the Shame of Nature in the " Charms of Language." Or if it be not debas'd to so exceeding vile Purposes, yet at best, 'tis Pity it should be all employ'd in Jestings and Trifle, in Mirth, and Raillery, and vain Amusement. Might it not have been laid out infinitely better, to allure Sinners to the Love of God, to adorn the Truths of our holy Profession, and give Credit to the Gospel of *Christ*, even in the Eyes of the Witty and Profane ?

I pity the *Man of lively Imagination* without sanctifying Grace. What a lovely Wilderness of blooming Weeds ! fair indeed in various Colours, but useless and unsavoury, and it must be burnt up with unquenchable Fire. You are the Persons whose happy Talents give a Relish to the common Comforts

forts of Life ; you diffuse Joy and Pleasure thro' all the Company, and enliven the dullest Hours ; your Presence is covered by all Men, and you are beloved of all : But how dismal is your State, if you neglect Holiness, and are not beloved of God ! Can you imagine that your gay Fancy will brighten the Gloom of Hell ? or give Airs to your selves, or your Companions, in those hideous Regions of Sorrow ? 'Tis a most melancholy Reflection to consider, that Persons of your Accomplishments should encrease the Number of the Damned ; and there is no Sport or Amusement admitted there, to divert the Anguish of the tortur'd Mind, or to relieve that heavy and everlasting Heart-ake.

I pity the *Man of strong Reason and great Sagacity of Judgment*, that hath traced Nature in her most secret Recesses ; that has sounded the Depths of the Sea, and measur'd the Heavens ; but has spent no Time in searching the deep Things of God, and lets the Mysteries of Religion lie unregarded, as obscure and useless Things. He has never sounded the Depth of his own Misery and Guilt, as he is a Son of *Adam* : Nor is he acquainted with the Way of climbing to Heaven by the Cross of the Son of God. Reason is a Faculty of supreme Excellence among the Gifts of Nature, and 'tis dreadful to think that it should ever be engaged

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gaged in Opposition to Divine Grace. How great and wretched are the Men of Reason, who strain the Nerves of their Soul to overturn the Doctrine of *Christ* ! who labour with all their intellectual Powers to shake the Foundations of the Gospel, to diminish the Authority of the Scriptures, and to unsettle the Hope of feeble Christians !

There are others who employ the best Powers of the Soul in pursuing the Interests of this Life ; they are wise in Contrivance to gratify their Appetites, to fill their Coffers, and to heap up to themselves Wealth and Honours ; and wise to secure all these to their Posterity after Death : *They call their Lands by their own Names*, and perpetuate their Memory to the latest Generations, but make no Provision for their own Souls : They are wise to set in Order their Houses in the Day of their Health, and all Things are prepared for their dying Hour, besides the Concerns of their own Eternity ; these are delay'd from Day to Day, and left at the utmost Hazard ; and still they think the next Month, or the next Year, it is Time enough to prepare for Heaven, when perhaps a Summons is sent suddenly from on high ; *Thou Fool, this Night is thy Soul requir'd of thee*, Luke xii. 20. What Confusion and Fear, what Hurry and Distress of Spirit will seize you in that Hour ?

Hour? You that have laid out all your Wisdom upon the little Businessses of this Life, and trifled with Affairs of everlasting Importance; you must go down to the Chambers of Death in Surprize and Anguish; you must leave all the Fruits of your Wisdom behind you, and be branded for eternal Fools.

I pity those *who are bless'd with a large Memory*, and would plead with you this Day for the Sake of your Souls. The Memory, it is a noble Repository of the Mind, 'tis made to receive Divine Truths, to be stored with the Ideas of God and his Grace, with the Glories of *Christ* and Heaven: 'Tis given us to furnish and supply the Heart and Tongue upon all Occasions, for Worship, for Conference, and for holy Joy. What Pity 'tis so wondrous a Capacity should be crouded with vile Images, with wanton Scenes, with profane Jest, and idle Stories! Or, at best, 'tis fill'd with Gold, and Silver, and Merchandize; with Lands and Houses, Ships and Insurances; 'tis all inscribed with Stocks, Annuities, and Purchases, and turn'd into a meer Book of Accounts, a Trading-Shop, or an everlasting Exchange: Night and Day, the Buyers and Sellers are passing thro' this Temple, which should be consecrated to God; and there's no Room left for the Thoughts of Heaven there. Shall these
busy

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busy Swarms of Cares and Vanities for ever fill up so large a Chamber of the Soul? Shall Impertinences be for ever thrust into this Treasury? such as will stand you in no stead, when you are dismiss'd from the Body, but shall vanish all at once in that Hour, and shall leave your Spirits poor and naked: or if they follow you to the World of Spirits, 'twill be but as so much Fuel gather'd for your future burning.

Think a little with your selves, *Ye Possessors of these rich Endowments of Mind*, when you have been honour'd here on Earth, can you bear to be doom'd to eternal Shame and Punishment in Hell? Shall this Wit, and this Reason, be there imploy'd to express your Hatred against God, and to forge perpetual Blasphemies against the Majesty of Heaven? Are you willing to be joined to the Society of Devils, and be engaged in their abominable Work? Shall this sprightly Fancy, this subtle Reason, this large Memory, serve for no purpose but to aggravate your Guilt, and your Damnation? Shall these fine Talents sharpen your Misery, and give edge to the keenest Reflections of Conscience; Conscience, that inward Sting of the Mind; Conscience, that immortal Tormentor? Yet this must be the certain Portion of those who spend their Life, and lie down
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in Death, with these Talents un sanctified : for the Anguish and Torture of sinful Souls, must rise, and grow for ever, in proportion to the Glory of their abused Endowments.

Tho', perhaps, I have been tedious already under this Head, yet before I part with it, I must address my self to those *who are born with a sweet Disposition*, that seem to be cast in a softer Mould than the rest of Men. I love and pity those of my Acquaintance who are blest'd with so divine a Temper, who have Tendernefs and Good-will in their very Form and Aspect, and I mourn to think that any of these should perish for ever. You are the Favourites of all Men, and beloved by all who enjoy the Pleasure of your Acquaintance ; do ye not long to be the Favourites of God too ? You seem to be made for the Delight and Comfort of Mankind : but shall this be all your Portion ? Good-humour is the Composition of your Nature, and the *Law of Kindness is on your Lips : when the Ear hears you, then it blesses you ; and when the Eye sees you, it gives witness to you.* But is this enough to depend upon for Eternal Life ? Perhaps you have borrowed part of the valuable Qualities of that Good-Man Job, *You have delivered the Poor that cry, and the Fatherless that had none to help him ; you have caused the Widow's Heart to sing for Joy,*
and

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and the Blessing of him that was ready to perish, has come often upon you ; Job xxix. 11, 12, 13. There's so much natural Goodness in your Constitution, that leads you on, by a sweet Instinct, to the Practice of many Charities : but this is not saving Grace. If *Jesus Christ* himself were upon Earth in this humbled State, he would look upon you, as Man, and love you : but the holy God looks down from Heaven, and beholds you as the Object of his just and divine Hatred, while you live in a State of Vanity and Sin, drunken with sensual Pleasures, and at Enmity with God.

This Sweetness of Temper, that springs from your Blood, and the happy Mixture of Humours ; or, at best, from the meer natural Frame of your Spirits ; will never pass, upon the great Tribunal, for Holiness and inward Religion. With all this charming Appearance of Vertues, these Colours that look like Heaven, you will be doom'd to Hell, and perpetual Misery, unless there be found in you some nobler Qualities, such as, Love to God, Mortification to this World, the Knowledge and Faith of *Jesus Christ*. If these be not the Springs of your Charity and Love to Men, you will not be secured from the condemning Sentence of the Judge, nor from the Company of Devils in the future World.

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But oh! How will your soft and gentle Natures bear the Insult and Rage of those malicious Spirits? How will your Temper, that had something so lovely in it, sustain to be banish'd for ever from the World of Love? to be for ever excluded from all the Regions of Peace and Concord? How will your Souls endure the Madness and Contention, the Envy and Spite of wicked Angels? You that delighted on Earth in the Works of Peace, what will ye do when your tender Dispositions shall be hourly ruffled by the Uproar and Confusion of those dark Regions? and instead of the Society of God and blessed Spirits, ye shall be eternally vex'd with the perverse Tempers of your Fellow-Sinners, the Sons of Darknefs? Oh that I could speak in melting Language, or in the Language of effectual Terror, that I might by any means awaken you Souls to Jealousy and timely Fear! That so many natural Excellencies, as God has distributed amongst you, might not be wasted in Sin, abused to Dishonour, and aggravate your everlasting Misery.

2dly, My next Exhortation shall be address'd to *those Youths who have been trained up in all the Arts of Civility, and have acquired a courteous and becoming Carriage.* There is something lovely in such an Appearance, and it commands the Love even of

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of the Rude and Uncivil. It so nearly resembles the Sweetness of natural Temper, and imitates Good-humour so much to the Life, that it often passes upon Company instead of Nature, and attains many valuable Ends in human Society. But where both these are happily join'd, how shining is that Character, and universally beloved? We are pleas'd and charm'd with your Conversation, whose Manners are polish'd, and whose Language is refin'd from the rude and vulgar Ways of Speech. You know how to speak civil Things, without Flattery, upon all Occasions; to instruct, without assuming a superior Air, and to reprove, without a Frown, or forbidding Countenance. You have learn'd when to speak, and when to be silent, and to perform every Act of Life with its proper Graces: and can ye be content, with all this Good-breeding, to be thrust down to Hell? Is it not pity that you should be taught to pay all your Honours to Men, and practise none to the Living God? Have you not read those Duties in Connection? *1 Pet. ii. 17. Honour all Men, love the Brotherhood, fear God, and honour the King.* And why will you divide what God has joined, and give every one their due, besides God your Maker? How dare you treat the Creatures with Decency and Ceremony, and treat God the Creator with Neglect? salute all Men with their
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proper Titles of Distinction, and not learn how to address God in Prayer? pay due Visits to all your Acquaintance, and yet scarce ever make a Visit to the Mercy Seat, or bow your Knees before the Majesty of Heaven.

I pity those who have all the Arts of Complaisance in Perfection, and practise Civility in every Form; but are very little acquainted with the Forms of Godliness, and never yet felt any Thing of the Life of Religion, or the Powers of the World to come. How mournful a Sight is it to behold a well accomplished Gentleman, yet a vile Sinner! A pretty obliging Youth among Men, but deaf and obstinate to all the Calls of God, and the Entreaties of a dying Saviour! A Person of a free and ingenious Deportment, yet in Chains of Slavery to Corruption and Death! And how unspeakably sorrowful will it be at the Last-Day, to see such as these, the gay, the affable, the fair-spoken, and the well-bred Sinner, in the utmost Agonies of Horror and Despair, mourning a lost God, a lost Soul, and a lost Heaven!

Let me speak once more, and try to provoke you to Jealousy. Shall the rugged and clownish Part of Mankind press forward into that Kingdom which ye despise? Will ye be patient to see some of the unbred and unpolish'd set at the Right-hand of
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the Judge, and your selves, with Shame, be divided to the Left? How will ye endure to see the Honours of Heaven put upon those whom you have so often despised in your Hearts upon Earth? Can you imagine that that Tribunal will be bribed with fair Speeches? or that any Thing will be accepted in that Court, besides solid and hearty Religion? Suffer this Exhortation then, and receive this Advice, you that are not used to deny any Thing to your Friends, you that love to oblige those who ask any reasonable Favour at your Hands; nor let me plead this Day in vain.

3dly, *To those that have enjoy'd the Blessing of religious Parents, and a pious Education; that have been bred up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord, in the Knowledge and Practice of the Moral Law, and in the outward Performance of Religion, according to the Appointments of the Gospel.* Children, we love you for your Fathers sakes: we love to look upon you, for you are the little living Images of our dearest Friends: we have lov'd to ask you the younger Questions that your Parents have taught you, and to see the first Fruits of their Instruction and holy Care; but we pity you, from our very Souls, when we behold you break the Bars of your Education, and making haste to Ruin: or when, at best, ye go on and tread the Circle of outward Duties, as ye are led by Custom and Form,

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with a Neglect of inward Christianity and hearty Godliness.

Did your Parents love God above all earthly Things, and will ye prefer the Love of this World above all Things heavenly and divine? Have ye had such shining Examples of Holiness brought so near you to no purpose? Do they pray for you daily? Do they daily mourn over you, and hope, and wish, and exhort you to take Care of your Souls? And are you resolved that their Counsels, their Prayers, and their Tears, shall be laid out upon you in vain? Is this the Return you make for all their Care and Compassion? They tell you daily that they can have *no greater Joy than to see their Children walking in the Truth*, and will you cruelly disappoint their Pleasures, and bring down their Grey-Hairs with Sorrow to the Grave? Perhaps there are some of you, who already have parted with your Parents, and their Spirits are at rest; and has neither their Life, nor their Death, made serious and lasting Impressions upon you? Have they entreated you in their last dying Moments, by all that is dear and sacred, to make sure of Heaven? And will you abandon these Entreaties, and sell your Souls to the World, and to Death, for a few perishing Temptations? Have they laid a solemn Charge upon you, at their last Farewell, to travel in the Paths of Piety, and meet them on Mount Sion in the

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the Great Day? and have you wandred already from this High-road of Holiness, and forgot the Solemnity and the Charge? Shall your Parents dwell for ever with their God, and shall their Children for ever dwell in Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels?

You cannot sin at so easy and so cheap a rate as others. You must break through stronger Bonds, and do bolder Violence to your Consciences, before you can indulge Iniquity, and pursue Wickedness. Your Temptations to Sin have been less than others, and your Advantages for Salvation have been much greater. Our Hearts bleed within us, to think of your double Guilt, and your aggravated Damnation; to think that you should not only be separated from your Parents, and their God, for ever, but that your Place of Torment shall be the hottest also, amongst all your Companions in Misery.

What Anguish, and inward Vexation, will seize you, when ye shall reflect how high ye were raised in outward Privileges, and how near ye were brought to Heaven? and how you quitted your Interest and your Hopes there, for the Trifles of this Life, for a base Lust, or a foolish Vanity? What will ye say, when ye shall see *many coming from the East, and from the West*, from Families of Wickedness, from the Ends of the Earth, and from the Borders of Hell, and sit

down with your Fathers in the Kingdom of Heaven ; while you, the Children of the Kingdom, are cast out into outer Darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth : Matth. viii. 11, 12. I presume thus far, with Freedom, to address you, if by any Methods I might provoke to Emulation them which are of the Flesh of Israel, of the Kindred of the Saints, and might save some of them, Rom. xi. 14.

4thly, To those who have taken some Pains in seeking after eternal Life, and are still enquiring the Way thither. Have a Care of resting in the meer Practice of Moral Duties, or in the outward Profession of Christianity ; never content your selves with the Righteousness of the Pharisee. Were your Vertues more glorious than they are, and your Righteousnesses more perfect, they could never answer for your former Guilt, before the Throne of a just and holy God. 'Tis only the Atonement of Christ, and his all-sufficient Sacrifice, which can stand you in stead there ; and 'tis Pity that a Youth, of so much Vertue, should fall short of Heaven, and be but almost a Christian. 'Tis Pity that you should have gain'd so large a Share of Knowledge, and so honourable a Character of Sobriety, and, after all, want the one Thing needful, an universal Change, and Renovation of your Hearts, by receiving the Gospel. Have you proceeded thus far, and

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and will you not go on to Perfection? Take heed that ye lose not the Things that ye have wrought, but that ye receive a full Reward, Ep. John viii.

'Tis Pity you should enquire the Way to Heaven, and not walk in it, when 'tis mark'd out before your Feet with so much Plainness: 'tis Pity ye should indulge the Love of this World so far, as to suffer it to forbid you the Pursuit of a better; or at best, when ye receive Instructions about your Souls, you let the Affairs of this Life overwhelm and bury that good Seed, and it never grows up to Practice. What would you say to the Folly of a Man, who has a long and hazardous Journey to make, to take Possession of a large Estate, and once a Week he comes to enquire the Way, and hears a fair Description of all the Road, perhaps he mourns his long Neglect, and resolves upon the Journey; but the next six Days are filled up with a thousand Impertinences; and when the seventh returns, he has not taken one Step forward in the Way?

Believe me, Sirs, 'tis not an easy Thing to be saved: Laziness, and meer Enquiries, will never effect your Happiness, nor secure your Souls from Perdition; and all the Pains you have already taken will be lost, if you give over the Pursuit. Let me call some of you this Day to remember your former Labours, the Prayers and the Tears that you have pou-

red out in secret before God; remember your Days of Darknes, and your Nights of Terror, the Groans of Conscience, and the inward Agonies you felt, when you were first awakened to behold your Guilt and Danger; remember these Hours, and these Sorrows; and love and pity your own Souls so far, as to pursue the Work, and let not all your Pains be lost: *Have ye suffered so many Things in vain, if it be yet in vain?* Gal. iii. 4. Ye have wrestled with some Sins, and have in Part got the mastery over them; and shall a darling Lust overcome you at last, and slay your Souls with eternal Death? Ye have resisted the Tempter in some of his Assaults, and put the Powers of Hell to flight; will you give up your selves at last to be led in Triumph by *Satan*, and become his everlasting Slaves? Methinks you look so amiable in those Victories ye have already obtain'd, that I would fain have you press onward through the Field of Battle, fulfil the Warfare, and receive the Crown.

The Ministers of the Gospel look upon you with Concern and Pity: We love you, because you have proceeded thus far in Religion; but ye shall not be the Beloved of God, if ye stop here, or go back again to Sin and Folly. We had a hopeful Prospect of you once, and said to our Lord in Prayer, "Surely these shall be one Day the Inhabi-
"tants,

"tants, and the Supports of thine House ;
 "these young Plants shall one Day be fruit-
 "ful Trees in thy Vineyard ; they shall be
 "Pillars in thy holy Temple." But alas !
 there is a Death upon our Hopes, there is a
 Darkness and a Lethargy upon your Souls :
 We look upon you in all these your Endow-
 ments, we mourn over you with Compassion,
 and with Zeal we express our Grief and our
 Love : Awake, ye young Sinners, who have
 deserv'd our Love ; awake, that ye sleep not
 to everlasting Death.

ably, *To those that are rich in this World,*
and are furnish'd with the former good Qualities
too. I am well assured, while I address my
 self to this Assembly, I speak to many Per-
 sons of this Character *. Ye are wealthy
 and condescending, like the Young Man in
 my Text ; ye are often uncover'd, and ye
 pay Reverence to the Ministers of the Gos-
 pel, as he did ; ye give us Honours and Ci-
 vilities beyond our Merit or Wish ; ye come
 and ask of us the same Question, *What shall*
we do to inherit Eternal Life ? And we tell
 you from the Word of God, *Love not the*
World, nor the Things of the World, for where
the Love of the World is, the Love of the Fa-
ther is not. If Riches increase, set not your
Heart upon them. Mortify your Affections that

* This Discourse was deliver'd at Tunbridge-Wells.

are upon the Earth, and deny your selves, take up your Cross, and follow Christ: Become his Disciples without Reserve, in Faith, and Love, and universal Holiness. While we propose these Paths to eternal Happiness, shall it be said concerning you, *They went away sorrowful, having great Possessions?*

Your condescending and affable Deportment, looks brighter by all the rich Lustre of your Habits; and the bigger your Circumstances are, the more lovely is your humble Attention to the Ministers of Christ, and your Readiness to hear our Words is the more commendable: But will ye be Hearers only, and never practise? The Time is coming, and the Hour makes haste upon you, when ye shall stand upon the Borders of the Grave, and look into that World of Spirits, where all the Honours and Distinctions of this World are known no more. Ye shall be stripp'd of those Vanities which ye lov'd above God and Heaven. Think how mean and despicable a Figure your Souls will make amongst fallen Angels, if the Love of this World, and Neglect of God, should bring you into that dreadful Company. What gay and swelling Figures soever you have made on Earth, you will make but a poor and wretched one in that World, if ye are found destitute of the Riches of Grace; and 'twill be a mournful Inscription written on your Tomb, *This rich Man died, and he lift up his Eyes*

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Eyes in Hell ; Luke xvi. 23. But, Beloved, we hope better *Things* of you, tho' we thus speak, and *Things* that accompany Salvation : Heb. vi. 9.

Thus I have finished the *first general Exhortation*, to those who have any valuable Qualities attending them, but through the Love of this World are tempted to neglect Heaven.

The *Second Exhortation* is address'd to those who are weaned, in some good Degree, from this World, and have *Treasures in Heaven*, but are defective in those good Qualities which might render them amiable upon Earth. I confess I have no direct Commission from my Text to address you here : But I'm unwilling and ashamed that a rich Young Man should go to Hell with some more lovely Appearances upon him than you have, who are in the Way to Heaven.

You have chosen God for your eternal Portion, and your highest Hope ; you have chosen his Son *Jesus* for your only Mediator, and your Way to the Father ; you have chosen the Worship and the Ordinances of God as your dearest Delight ; ye are the chosen Objects of the Love of God, and his Grace has inclined you to love him above all Things. Methinks I would not have any Blot cast upon so many Excellencies. Be ye advised therefore to seek after that agreeable Temper and Conduct, which may make you

beloved of Men too; that the wisest and best of Men may chuse you for an Honour to their Acquaintance and Company. This will render your Profession more honourable, and make Religion it self look more lovely in the Sight of the World.

What a foul Blemish 'tis to our Christianity, when we shall hear it said, "Here's a Man who professes the Gospel of Grace, but he does not practise the Decencies that the Light of Nature would teach him. He tells us, that he belongs to Heaven; but he has so little of Humanity in his Deportment, that he is hardly fit Company for any upon Earth." *Shall it be said of any of you,* "Here's a Man that pretends to the Love of God, but he is morose in his Disposition, rude in his Behaviour, and makes a very unlovely Figure amongst Men? Let him fill what Station he will in the Church, he bears but a disagreeable Character in the House, and disgraces the Family or the City where he dwells. What his secret Vertues or Graces are, we know not, for they shine all inward; he keeps all his Goodness to himself, and never suffers his Light to shine out amongst his Neighbours."

Can I bear that it should be said concerning me, "He seems indeed to have something of the Love of God in him, but he is so rough in his natural Temper, and

"so

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“ so uncorrected in his Manners, that scarce
“ any Man loves him ? He may bend his
“ Knees to God in Prayer, but he has not
“ common Civility towards Men. His Mo-
“ rality and Honesty appear not upon him
“ with Honour : His Vertue does not seem
“ to sit well about him, and his Religion is
“ dress’d in a very unpleasing Form.” Is
this the Way to give Reputation to the
Gospel ? Is this to *adorn the Doctrine of God*
our Saviour in all Things ? Tit. ii. 10. When
we become Christians, we *put away Bitter-*
ness, and Wrath, and Clamour, and Evil-speak-
ing, and Filthiness, and scurrilous Jest; Eph. iv.
31. & v. 4. We are commanded to *speak*
Evil of no Man, to be no Brawlers ; but to be
gentle, and *shew Meekness to all,* Tit. iii. 2. to
prefer one another in Honour ; to *bles,* and
curse not ; to *rejoice with them that rejoice, and*
to weep with them that weep ; to *condescend to*
Men of low Estate ; and, if possible, to *live*
peaceable with all Men ; Rom. xii.

Are there any Souls here of this unplea-
sing Character and Carriage ? Did you ever
read these Words in your Bibles ? Do ye
think these are the Commands of *Christ,* or
no ? You profess to love him above all, but
what Care have you taken to obey these
Precepts of his ? Or do you think the sub-
lime Practices of Faith and Adoration will
make these lower Duties needless ? Have ye
found the Sweetness of being at Peace with
God,

God, and tasted of the Pleasures of his Love; and can ye disregard all the Practices and the Pleasures of Love and Peace among Men?

We are not required indeed to sell Truth for Peace, nor strict Godliness for the Forms of Civility. There's no need that we should conform our selves to any of the sinful Practices of this World, in order to fulfil the Law of Love. But wheresoever the Customs of the Place where we dwell are consistent with the strict and holy Rules of *Christ*, we should practise them so far, as to render our selves agreeable to those with whom we converse, that we may shine in the World as the Honours of *Christ*, and that *Unbelievers may be won by our Conversation*, to come and hear our Gospel, to learn the same Faith, and embrace the same Hope: Not only the *Things that are true, and honest, and just, and pure*, but the *Things that are lovely* in the Sight of Men, and *Things that are of good Report*, must be the Subjects of our Meditation, our Learning, and Practice; *Phil. iv. 8.* *St. Paul*, that great Apostle, did not think these Things unworthy of his Care; he enjoins them upon the primitive Christians from his own Example, and promises them the Presence of the *God of Peace*. These are the Things that I have taught you, *said he*, these ye have heard and seen in me; conform your Manners to these Rules, and

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the God of Peace shall be with you, ver. 9.

Believe me, Friends, the natural Habit of Christianity is all Decency and Loveliness: We put the Religion of our Saviour into a Disguise, and make it look unlike itself, if our Temper be sour and fretful, if our Carriage be coarse and rude, and our Speech savour of Roughness and Wrath. A Jew might make a better Apology for a harsh and severe Deportment, than a Christian can do; he might put on a morose Air with better Countenance, and plead the Dispensation he was under, the Bondage of the Law, and the Terrors of Mount Sinai: But we, under the Gospel, are free-born, Gal. iv. 26, 31. and our Carriage should be ingenuous in all Respects. John the Baptist, in his Garment of Hair, may be indulged in a Roughness of Speech; he was but a Fore-runner of the Gospel, and can hardly be called a Christian: But the Followers of the Lamb should have a mild Aspect, a pleasing Manner, that every one who beholds us, may love us too; that the Son of God, if he were here upon Earth, might look upon us, and love us in both his Natures, with a Divine and Human Love.

Thirdly, The last Address I would make to those whose are furnish'd with every good Quality, and every divine Grace, who are beloved by God and Men. Such a one was our Lord Jesus Christ in the Days of his Flesh: He, from

from his very Childhood, grew in *Wisdom and in Stature, and in Favour with God and Man*, Luke ii. 52. He had further Discoveries of Divine Love made to him daily ; and as his Acquaintance increased in his younger Years, so did his Friends too, till his Divine Commission made it necessary for him to oppose the Corruptions of his Country, and reform a wicked Age, and thus expose himself to the Anger of a Nation that would not be reformed. There was something lovely in his Human Nature, beyond the common Appearance of Mankind ; for his Body was a Temple, in which the Godhead dwelt in a peculiar and transcendent Manner, and his Soul was intimately united to Divinity. I cannot but think, that, in a literal Sense, he was *fairer than the Children of Men*, and that there was *Grace on his Lips*, and a natural Sweetness in his Language, *Psal. xlv. 2.* If the Jews beheld no *Comeliness in him*, if his *Visage was marr'd more than the Sons of Men*, 'twas because he was a *Man of uncommon Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief* ; which might cast something of Heaviness or Gloom upon his Countenance, or wear out the Features of Youth too soon. But surely our Lord, in the whole Composition of his Nature, in the Mildness of his Deportment, and in all the Graces of Conversation, was the *chiefest of ten thousands, and altogether lovely*. How amiable are those who are made like him ?

Such

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Such was *John* the beloved Disciple ; you may read the Temper of his Soul in his Epistles : What a Spirit of Love breathes in every Line ? What Compassion and Tenderness to the Babes in *Christ* ? What condescending Affection to the young Men, and hearty Good Will to the Fathers, who were then his Equals in Age ? With what obliging Language does he treat the beloved *Gaius*, in his third Letter ; and with how much Civility, and hearty Kindness, does he address the Elect Lady and her Children, in the second ? In his younger Years, indeed, he seems to have something more of Fire and Vehemence, for which he was surnamed a *Son of Thunder*, Mark iii. 17. But our Lord saw so much Good Temper in him, mingled with that Sprightliness and Zeal, that he express'd much Pleasure in his Company, and favour'd him with peculiar Honours and Indearments above the rest. This is the Disciple who was taken into the holy Mount with *James* and *Peter*, and saw our Lord glorified before the Time ; this is the Disciple who lean'd on his Bosom at the holy Supper, and was indulged the utmost Freedom of Conversation with his Lord, *John* xiii. 23, 24, 25. This is the Man who obtain'd this glorious Title, *The Disciple whom Jesus loved* ; that is, with a distinguishing and particular Love. As God, and as a Saviour, he loved them all like Saints ; but as Man, he

he loved St. *John* like a Friend, *John* xxi. 20. and when hanging upon the Cross, and just expiring, he committed his Mother to his Care; a most precious and convincing Pledge of special Friendship.

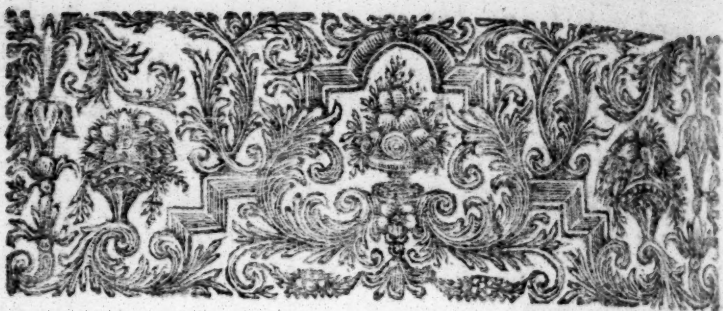
O how happy are the Persons who most nearly resemble this Apostle, who are thus privileged, thus divinely blest! How infinitely are ye indebted to God your Benefactor, and your Father, who has endow'd you with so many valuable Accomplishments on Earth, and assures you of the Happiness of Heaven? 'Tis he who has made you fair, or wise; 'tis he who has given you Ingenuity, or Riches, or, perhaps, has favour'd you with all these; and yet has weaned your Hearts from the Love of this World, and led you to the Pursuit of Eternal Life: 'Tis he that has cast you in so refin'd a Mould, and given you so sweet a Disposition, that has inclined you to Sobriety and every Virtue, has raised you to Honour and Esteem, has made you Possessors of all that is desirable in this Life, and appointed you a nobler Inheritance in that which is to come. What Thankfulness does every Power of your Natures owe to your God? that Heaven looks down upon you, and loves you, and the World around you fix their Eyes upon you, and love you: That God has formed you in so bright a Resemblance of his own Son, his First-beloved, and has ordained

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dained you Joint-Heirs of Heaven with him;
Rom. viii. 17.

Watch hourly against the Temptations of Pride; remember the fallen Angels, and their once exalted Station; and have a Care lest ye also *be puffed up, and fall into the Condemnation of the Devil.* Walk before God with exactest Care, and in deepest Humility. Let that Divine Vail be spread over all your Honours, that, as you are the fairest Images of *Christ*, ye may be dress'd like him too; for he who is the highest Son of God in his Eternal Nature, is also the holiest of the Sons of Men, and the humblest of every Creature.





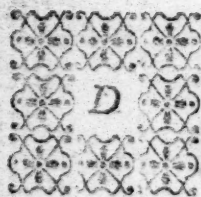
SERMON IX.

The Hidden Life of a Christian.

COL. iii. 3.

*You are dead, and your Life is hid with
Christ in God.*

The First Part.



DEATH and *Life* are two Words of a solemn and important Sound. They carry so much of Force and Moment in them, as must awaken Mankind to Attention ; and therefore the Spirit of God often uses them as Metaphors, to express Things *unseen and spiritual*, and to describe the State both of *Saints and Sinners* : So that all who are *alive* on the Face of the Earth, in the Language of Scripture, are said to be *dead* too, but in different Senses.

Those

Those who are in a State of Nature, and under the Power of Sin, unpardoned and un-sanctified, are *dead in Trespasses and Sins*; yet they live the Life of Brutes in the *Lusts of the Flesh*, or the Life of Devils in the *Lusts of the Mind*, Eph. ii. 1, 2.

Those who are recovered from the Fall, and brought into a State of Grace by the Gospel of *Christ*, are said to be dead also; that is, they are *dead to Sin*, Rom. vi. 11. and they are *crucified*, and so dead to the *World*, Gal. vi. 14. The Delights of Sin are hateful to them, so that they allure them not to forsake their God; and the lawful Enjoyments of Life are so far tasteless to the Saints, in Comparison of the Things of Heaven, that they have much less Influence, than once they had, to tempt them away from God, and from the Practice of Holiness.

'Tis in this Sense the Christian *Colossians* are said to be *dead* in my Text. But they have another, a *new Life*, and that of a different kind; such as is mentioned in this Verse, and which is *hid with Christ in God*: and 'tis this *Hidden Life* shall be the chief Subject of my Discourse.

These latter Words of the Text afford two plain and easy Propositions or *Doctrines*.

I. *That the Life of a Christian is a Hidden Life.*

II. *That*

II. *That it is hid with Christ in God.* Let us meditate on them in Order.

Doctrine I. A Christian's Life is a Hidden Life.

Here we shall,

First, Consider what is this Life, which is said to be hidden. And,

Secondly, In what Respects it is so.

First, What is this Life of a Christian which is said to be hidden?

Not the *animal Life*, whereby he eats, drinks, sleeps, moves, and walks; this is visible enough to all about him. Not the *Civil Life*, as he stands in relation to other Men in the World, whether as a Son, as a Father, a Master, or a Servant, a Trader, a Labourer, or an Officer in the State: For all these are publick, and seen of Men.

But the *hidden Life* is that whereby he is a *Christian indeed*; his *spiritual Life*, wherein he is devoted to God, and lives to the Purposes of Heaven and Eternity. And this is the same *Life*, which, in other Parts of Scripture, is called *eternal*; for the Life of Grace survives the Grave, and is prolonged into Glory. The same Life of Piety and inward Pleasure, which begins on Earth, is fulfilled in Heaven; and it may be called the *Spiritual*, or the *Eternal Life*, according to

to different respects ; for 'tis the same continued Life acting in different Stations or Places, and running thro' Time and Eternity : 1 John v. 11, 12. *Eternal Life is in the Son, and he that bath the Son, bath this Life ;* 'tis begun in him, he is already possessed of it in some Degree.

As the Life of the *Child* is the same with that of the *full-grown Man* ; as the same vital Principles and Powers run thro' the several successive Stages of Infancy, Youth, and Manhood ; so the *Divine Life of a Saint*, begun on Earth, runs thro' this World, thro' Death, and the separate State of Souls ; it appears in full-grown Perfection, in the final Heaven, when the whole Saint shall stand compleat in Glory. Thus the *spiritual Life of a Christian* is *eternal Life begun* ; and *eternal Life* is the *spiritual Life* made perfect.

If we would describe this Life in short, it may be represented thus : 'Tis a *Life of Faith, Holiness, and Peace* ; a *Life of Faith*, or Dependance upon God for all that we want ; a *Life of Holiness*, rendering back again to God, in a Way of Honour and Service, whatsoever we receive from him in a way of Mercy ; and a *Life of Peace*, in the comfortable Sense of the Favour of God, and our Acceptance with him thro' *Jesus Christ*. All these begin on Earth, and in this Sense *Faith* it self, as well as *Peace* and *Holiness*, shall abide

abide in Heaven: we shall for ever be *Dependants*, for ever *happy*, and for ever *holy*.

In a State of Nature the Man lived such a sinful and carnal Life, that was more properly called *Death*; but when he becomes a Believer, a true Christian, he is *new-created*, 2 Cor. v. 17. *new-born*, John iii. 3. *raised from the Dead*, and *quicken*ed to a new Life, Eph. ii. 1, 5. which is called *being risen with Christ*, in the Verses before my Text, Col. iii. 1. And this very *Spiritual Life*, as the effect of our symbolical Resurrection with *Christ*, is the Subject of several Verses of the 6th chap. to *Rom.* whence I cannot but infer the same to be designed here, (*viz.*) That the Christian who is dead to Sin, is *risen with Christ*, and *alive to God*; as *Rom.* vi. 11. All the Life that he lived before, with all the Show and Bravery of it, with all the Bustle and Business, the Entertainments and Delights of it, was but a meer Dream, a Fancy, the Picture of Life, a Shadow and Emptiness, and but little above the Brutes that perish. Now he lives a real, a substantial, a divine Life, a-kin to God and Angels, and quite of a different Nature from what the Men of this World live.

There is this Difference indeed which the Scripture makes between the *Spiritual Life* and the *Eternal*. The First chiefly respects the Operations of the Soul, for the Life of the Body is not immortal here; the

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second includes Soul and Body too, for both shall possess Immortality hereafter. *The first* is attended with many Difficulties and Sorrows; *the second* is all Ease and Pleasure. *The first* is represented as the Labour and Service; *the last*, as the great (tho' unmerited) Reward. Gal. vi. 8. *He that soweth to the Spirit, and fulfils the Duties of the Spiritual Life, shall of the Spirit reap Life Everlasting.* *The one*, is the Life of Holiness and inward Peace, tho' mingled with many Defects, and surrounded with a thousand Disadvantages and Tryals: *the other*, is the same Life of Holiness and Peace, having surmounted every Difficulty, shining and exulting in full Joy and Glory.

Secondly, We come to consider, *In what Respects this Life may be called a hidden Life.*

And here I shall distinguish that Part of it, which is more usually called the *Spiritual Life*, and is exercised in this World, from that which is more frequently called *Life Eternal*, and belongs rather to the World to come: and then I shall make distinct *Inferences* from the Consideration of each.

Now let us consider wherein the *Spiritual Life* is said to be *hidden*.

1st, *The Acts and Exercises of it are secret and unknown to the publick World.* The Saint is much engaged in the important and hidden Concerns of his Divine Life; and his Converse

Converse is with *God* and *Christ*, who dwell in the World of Invisibles.

Who knows the secret Transactions between *God* and the Soul of a Christian, when he first entred into Covenant with *God*, through *Christ* the Mediator, and began this happy Life? Who can tell the inward Workings of his Spirit towards *Jesus Christ* his Lord, in the first Efforts of his Faith, and Embraces of a Saviour? Who was acquainted with the secret Sorrows of his Soul, when he was first set a mourning for his past Sins, and humbled himself in Bitterness before *God*? Or who can express the surprizing Delight, and secret Satisfaction he felt at Heart, when *God* communicated to him the first lively Hope of Forgiveness and Divine Salvation? O the unknown Joys of such an Hour which some Christians have experienced, when a Divine Beam of Light shone into their Souls, and revealed *Jesus Christ within them*, as *St. Paul* speaks: when they saw his All-sufficiency of Righteousness and Grace, to answer their infinite Necessities; and when they durst believe in him as their Saviour!

And as the *Beginnings* of this Life are hidden from the World, so the *Exercises* and *Progress* of it are a Secret too. While the World is following after Idols and Vanity, the Christian, in his retired Chambers, breathes after his *God* and his Redeemer,

deemer, and gives a Loose to his warmest Affections, in the Pursuit of his Almighty Friend, and his Best-beloved. While the Men of this World are vexing their Spirits, and fretting under present Disappointments, he dwells in a lonesome Corner, mourning for his Sins and Follies. And at another Time, while the Children of Vanity grow proud in publick, and boast of their large Possessions and Inheritances, he rejoices in secret, in the Hope of Glory, and takes Divine Delight in the Fore-Thought of his better *Inheritance among the Saints: His Conversation is in Heaven*; Phil. iii. ult.

I might run through all the Exercises of the sanctify'd *Affections*, and the various Parts of Divine *Worship*, and of the *Conduct* of a Saint among the Children of Men. With what humble Fear does he entertain the Mention of the Name of God? With what deep Self-Abasement, and inward Adoration? At the Presence of Sin, how is his Anger stirred? and his holy Watchfulness, when Temptations appear? How does he labour and wrestle, fight and strive, lest he be overcome by the secret Enemies of his Soul? And as his *Bitterness of Heart* is unknown to the World, so a *Stranger intermeddles not with his Joy*, Prov. xiv. 10. He feeds on the same Provision which his Lord Jesus did on Earth, for 'tis *his Meat and his Drink to do the Will of his Father which is in Heaven*:

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This

This is a Feast to the Christian, *which the World knows not of*; John iv. 32, 34.

Idly, *The Springs and Principles of this Life are hidden and unknown to the World*; and therefore the World esteems many of the Actions of a true Christian very strange and unaccountable Things, (as we shall show afterward) because they see not the Springs of them.

The *Word of God*, or the *Gospel*, with all the *hidden Treasures of it*, is the chief *Instrument*, or *Means*, whereby this Divine Life is wrought and supported in the Soul. The true Christian beholds the Purity of God in the Precepts; he reads Grace, Heaven, and Glory, in the Promises; he sees the Words of the Bible in a Divine Light, and feeds sweetly on the hidden Blessings of Scripture, deriving Life, and Nourishment, and Joy from it; whereas the carnal World, go not far beyond the Letters and Syllables. The Gospel, which is all Light and Glory to a Saint, *is hidden to them that are lost*, 2 Cor. iv. 3.

This same Gospel is *written in the Heart of a Christian*, and is the Principle of his Life there. This is immortal and incorruptible, the Seed of the Word abiding in the Heart; the Image of the Eternal God drawn out in such Characters as our Nature can bear: For the written Word is a Transcript of God's Holiness; and when 'tis inwrought into

into all the Powers of a believing Soul, it becomes a vi-*al* Principle within him for ever. A Believer is, as it were, cast in the very Mould of the Gospel; so the Word signifies, *Rom. vi. 17.* This is the *Word hidden in the Heart*, that secures the Saint from Sin, *Psal. cxix. 11.*

The Motives and Springs that awaken a Christian to keep up, and maintain this spiritual Life, are Things hidden from the Eyes of the World; *Things eternal and invisible*, *2 Cor. iv. ver. ult.* While we look not at the Things that are seen, that are temporal; but at the Things that are unseen, and eternal; we then count the Joys or Sorrows of this World, Things of little Importance; then we live like Christians, and the *Life of our Lord Jesus is manifested*, or copied out, in our Lives, as *ver. 10, 11.*

The Habits of Grace and Holiness in the Heart of Believers, whence all the Actions of the spiritual Life proceed, are secret and hidden. Who knows how they were wrought at first? how this heavenly Breath, this divine Life was infused, which changed a dead Sinner into a living Saint? Our Saviour himself compares this *Work of the Spirit* to the *Wind*, *John iii. 8.* We hear the Sound, we feel and see the Effects of it, but we know not whence it comes, nor whither it goes; so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Who can describe those

secret and Almighty Influences of the Blessed Spirit on the Mind and Will of Man, which work with such a sovereign, and yet such a gentle and con-natural Agency, that the Believer himself hardly knows it, but by the gracious Effects of it, and the blessed Alterations wrought in his Soul?

'Tis this glorious Agent, this Creator, *this blessed Spirit of God*, who is the *uncreated Principle* of this Life. The Spirit, as proceeding from our Lord *Jesus Christ*, begun this Life at first in the Soul; and the same glorious unseen Power carries it on through all Difficulties and Oppositions, and will fulfil it in Glory.

I must add also, that *Christ* himself, who is said to be *our Life* in the Verse following my Text, is at present hidden from us; he dwells in the unseen World, and the *Heavens must receive him till the Restitution of all Things*; Acts iii. 21.

Christ Jesus is the *Bread from Heaven*, John vi. 32, 33. by which the Believer is nourished; he is the *hidden Manna*, the divine Food of Souls: 'Tis upon him the Christian lives daily and hourly; 'tis upon the Blood of the Lamb, which is carried up to the Mercy-Seat, that the Believer lives for Pardon and Peace with God: 'Tis upon the Righteousness of his Lord and Head, that he lives for his everlasting Acceptance
before

before the Throne; 'tis upon the Grace and Strength of *Christ*, that he rests and depends all the Day, when he is called forth to encounter the boldest Temptations, to fulfil the most difficult Duties, or to sustain the heaviest Strokes of a painful Providence. "Surely, saith the Saint, *in the Lord alone have I Righteousness and Strength*, Isa. xlv. 24. In the Lord my Saviour, whom *the World sees not; but I see him by the Eye of Faith.*"

I shall enlarge farther on this Subject under the *second Doctrine*.

Thus, whether we consider the spiritual *Acts and Exercises* of this Christian Life, or the *Springs and Principles* of it, still we shall find it has just Reason to be called a *secret*, or a *hidden Life*.

Before I proceed, I shall lay down these *two Cautions*.

1st Caution. Though it is a hidden Life, yet I intreat my Christian Friends, that *they would not suffer it to be such a Secret, as to be unknown to themselves.* God has ordained it to be hidden, not that it might always be unknown to you, but that you might search after it with Diligence; and that when you find your selves possessed of it, you might rejoice in the Evidences of your Life, and his Love. Be not satisfied then, O ye Professors of the Gospel! until you have searched and found this Divine

Life within you. What a poor Life must that Christian live, who goes from Day to Day, and from Year to Year, and still complains, *I know not whether I am alive or no?*

Labour, therefore, after Self-acquaintance, since God has been pleased, in his Word, to furnish us with sufficient Means to find out our Estate; *1 John v. 17. These Things write I unto you*, says the Apostle, *that ye may believe on the Name of the Son of God, and that ye may know that ye believe.* 'Tis a Dishonour to the Gospel of Christ, to abide always in Darkeness and Doubtings, and to rest contented in so uncomfortable a Frame. We are told, in *Revel. ii. 17.* that those whose Life is supported by this *hidden Manna*, have also a *White Stone* given them, with a new Name in it, which no Man knows, *save he that receives it*; that is, they have Divine Absolution and Pardon of their Sins, which was represented heretofore, in some Courts of Judicature, by the Gift of a *White Stone*; but surely, if my own Name were written in it, I would use my utmost Endeavours to read the Inscription my self, though it may be a Secret to the rest of Mankind; then my God and Saviour shall have the Honour of his pardoning Love, and then my Soul shall enjoy the Consolation.

2d Caution. Though it be a hidden Life in the sacred *Operations* and the *Springs* of it,

it, *Yet the World ought to see the blessed Effects of it. We must hold forth to Men the Word of Life,* Phil. ii. 16. Let the World see that we live to God, and that by the secret Power of his Word in the Gospel.

The *Christian Life* is no fantastick and visionary Matter, that consists in warm Imaginations, and Pretences to inward Light and Rapture; 'tis a real Change of Heart and Practice, from Sin to Holiness, and a Turn of Soul from Earth toward Heaven. It has been drest up, indeed, like *Enthusiastick Foolery*, by the impious Wits of Men, and painted for a Subject of Ridicule and Reproach. Thus the Saints and holy Martyrs have been clad in a *Fool's-Coat*, or a *Bear's-Skin*, but they are still *Men*, and *wise Men* too; they have been drest up like *Devils*, but they are still the *Sons of God*. So secret Piety has solid Reason and Scripture still on its Side, whatsoever silly Scandals have been cast upon it; there is no just Cause, therefore, to be ashamed of professing it. There is nothing in all the Christian Life, that a Man needs to blush at. *We have renounced the hidden Things of Dishonesty, Knavery, and Unclean-ness*, when we began to be Christians, 2 Cor. iv. 2. 'Tis our Glory that we are alive to God, and we should be ashamed of nothing that either exercises or maintains this Life. None of the Duties of Worship,

none of the Practices of Godliness, that render Religion honourable among Men, and make God our Saviour appear glorious in the World, should be neglected by us, whenever we are called to practise or profess them.

The *Effects* of this hidden Life should not all be secret, tho' the *Springs* of it are so; for Christians are commanded to make *their Light shine before Men, that others may glorify their Father which is in Heaven*, Matth. v. 14, 15, 16. The *Lights of the World* must not place themselves *under a Bushel*, and be contented to shine there useles and alone; we must give Honour to God in Publick. And tho' we are commanded to practise such Secrecy and Self-denial in our Deeds of Charity, as may secure us from all Ostentation and Pride, yet we must sometimes make it appear too, that we do good to Men, that Christianity may have the Glory of it. We must feed the Hungry, we must clothe the Naked, we must love all Men, even our Enemies, and discover to the World that we are Christians, by noble and sublime Practices of every Vertue and every Duty, as far as 'tis possible, even by the best Works, to discover inward Religion.

I proceed now to draw some *Inferences* from the hidden Nature of the Spiritual Life.

And

And my first *Inference* would teach you *not* to rest satisfied with any *Externals*; for they who put forth no other *Acts of Life*, but what the World sees, are no true Christians.

We eat, we drink, and sleep; that is the *Life of Nature*; we buy and sell, we labour and converse; that's the *Civil Life*; we trifle, visit, tattle, flutter, and rove among a hundred *Impertinencies*, without any formed or settled *Design* what we live for; that is the *Idle Life*; and 'tis the kindest Name that I can bestow upon it. We learn our Creed, we go to Church, we say our Prayers, and read Chapters or Sermons; these are the *outward Forms* of the *Religious Life*. And is this all? Have we no daily secret Exercises of Soul in Retirement and Converse with God? No Time spent with our own Hearts? Are we never busied, in some hidden Corner, about the Affairs of Eternity? Are there no Seasons allotted for Prayer, for Meditation, for Reading in secret, and Self-enquiries? Nothing to do with God alone in a whole Day together? Surely this can never be the Life of a Christian.

Remember, O Man, there is nothing of all the Labours or Services, the Acts of Zeal or Devotion, that thou can'st practise in Publick, but a subtle Hypocrite may so nearly imitate the same, that it will be hard to discover the Difference. There is no-

thing of all these outward Forms, therefore, that can safely and infallibly distinguish thee from a Hypocrite, and false Professor; for the same Actions may proceed from inward Motions and Principles widely different. If you would obtain any Evidence that you are a Christian indeed, you must make it appear to your own Conscience by the Exercises of the hidden Life, and the secret Transactions between God and your Soul. *He was not a Jew, of old, who was one outwardly in the Letter only; nor is he a Christian, who has meer outward Forms; but a Jew, or a Christian, in the Sight of God, is such a one as hath the Religion in his Heart, and in Spirit, whose Praise is not of Men, but of God, Rom. ii. 29.*

IId Inference. *The Life of a Saint is a Matter of Wonder to the sinful World; for they know not what he lives upon.* The Sons of Ambition follow after Grandeur and Power; the Animals of Pleasure pursue all the Luxuries of Sense; the Miser hunts after Money, and is ever digging for Gold. 'Tis visible enough what these Men live upon. But the Christian, who lives in the Power and Glory of the Divine Life, seeks after none of these, any farther than as Duty leads him, and the Supports and Conveniencies of Life are needful, in the present State of his Habitation in the Flesh.

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The Sinner wonders what 'tis the Saint aims at, while he neglects the tempting Idols that himself adores, and despises the gilded Vanities of a Court, and abhors the guilty Scenes of a voluptuous Life. *Christ* and his *Children are*, and will be, *Signs and Wonders* to the Age they live in, *Isa. viii. 18.* compar'd with *Heb. ii. 13.*

The Men of this World wonder what a Christian can have to say to God in so many retiring Hours as he appoints for that End; what strange Business he can employ himself in; how he can lay out so much Time in Affairs, which the carnal Mind has no Notion of. On the other hand, the Saint, when he is in a lively Frame, thinks that all the Intervals of his civil Life, and all the vacant Seasons that he can find between the necessary Duties of his worldly Station, are all little enough to transact Affairs of such awful Importance as he has to do with God, and little enough to enjoy those secret Pleasures of Religion, which the Stranger is unacquainted with. The Children of God *pray to their heavenly Father in secret*, and they feel unknown Refreshment and Delight in it; and they are well assured, that *their Father who seeth in secret, will hereafter reward them openly*, *Mat. vi. 6.*

'Tis no wonder, that the profane World reproaches true Christians as dull lifeless Creatures, Animals that have neither Soul
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nor Spirit in them, because they do not see them run to the same Excess in Things of the lower Life. Alas! they know not that the Life of a Christian is on high; they see it not, for 'tis hidden; and therefore they wonder we are not busily engaged in the same Practices and Pursuits as they are, 1 Pet. iv. 4. *They think it strange that we run not to the same Excesses of Riot.* The World sees nothing of our inward Labour and Strife against Flesh and Self, our sacred Contest for the Prize of Glory; they know nothing of our earnest Enquiries after an absent God, and a hidden Saviour; and least of all do they know the holy Joys, and retired Pleasures of a Christian, because these are Things which are seldom communicated to others; and therefore the World grows bold to call Religion *a melancholy Thing*, and the Christian *a meer Mope*. But the Soul who lives above, who lives within Sight of the World of Invisibles, can despise the Reproach of Sinners.

III^d Inference. See the Reason why Christians have not their Passions so much engaged in the Things of this Life, as other Men have, because their chief Concern is about their better Life, which is hidden and unseen. They can look upon fine Equipages, gay Clothes, and rich Appearances in the World, without Envy; they can survey large Estates, and see many Thousands gotten in Haste by those that resolve to be rich, and yet not let loose
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one covetous Wish upon them; they have a God whom they worship in secret, and they trust his Blessing to make them sufficiently rich in the way of Diligence in their Stations; they hope they shall have Blessings mingled with their mean Estate, and no Sorrows added to their Wealth.

They can find themselves exalted by Providence to high Stations in the World, and not be puffed up in Countenance, nor swell at Heart. If they are but watchful to keep their Divine Life vigorous, they will distinguish themselves as Christians, even in Scarlet and Gold, and that by a glorious Humility. They know that all their Advancements on Earth are but mean and despicable Things, in comparison of their highest Hopes, and their promised Crown in Heaven. They can meet threatening Dangers, Diseases, and Deaths, without those Terrors that overwhelm the carnal Sinner; for their better Life shall never die. They can sustain Losses, and sink in the World, when it comes by the meer Providence of God, without their own culpable Folly, and bear it with a humble Resignation of Spirit, and with much inward Serenity and Peace; for the Things which they have lost were not their Life; all these were visible, but their Life is hidden; *Phil. iv. 12. I know how to be abased, and how to be exalted; I know how to abound, and to suffer want; I can do all these Things through Christ strengthening me.*
Christ,

Christ, who is the Principle of my inward Life.

O! that the Christians of our Day had more of this sublime Conduct, more of these noble Evidences of the Life of Christianity!

IVth Inference. *How vain and needless a Thing is it for a Christian to affect Popularity, and to set up for Show in this World!* How vain is it for him to be impatient to appear and shine among Men, for he has Honours and Treasures, Joys and Glories, that are incomparably greater, and yet a Secret to the World. A Christian's true Life is hidden, and he should not be too fond of publick and gay Appearances.

The Apostle Peter gives Advice how the Christian Women should behave themselves, not as the rest of the World do, who set themselves forth to publick Show, with many *Ornaments of Gold and Pearl*; but the Believer should adorn her self with *Modesty*, and with every Grace, *in the hidden Man of the Heart*, 1 Pet. iii. 4.

How unreasonable is it for us who profess the Christian Life to be cast down, if we are confined to an obscure Station in the World! Was not the Lord of Glory, when he came down on Earth to give us a Pattern of the Spiritual Life, content to be obscure for thirty Years together? Was he not unknown to Men, but as a common Car-

Carpenter, or a poor Carpenter's Son? And in those four Years of Appearance which he made as a Preacher, how mean, how contemptible were the Circumstances of Life which he chose! And shall we be impatient and fretful under the same humbled Estate? Do we dislike so divine a Precedent? Must we, like Mushrooms of the Earth, be exalted, and grow fond of making a publick Figure, when the King of Heaven was so poor and lowly? We lose publick Honour and Applause indeed, but perhaps our hidden Life thrives the better for it, when we resist the Charms of Grandeur.

Besides, this is not a Christian's Time for appearing, whilst *Christ* himself is absent and unseen. The Believer's Shining-time is not yet come; but the *Marriage-day of the Lamb* is hastening, and *the Bride* is making *her self ready*. The general Resurrection is our great Shining-day: *When Christ, who is our Life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in Glory*; and the Christian is content to stay for his Robes of Light, and his publick Honours, till the Dawn of that glorious Morning.

Nor should we dare to be censorious of those who make a poor Figure, and but mean Appearance in the World; perhaps they are some of *Christ's* hidden ones; they promise but little, and show but little, either Wit or Parts, Prudence or Power, Skill

or Influence; and perhaps they have but little too; but they know God, they trust in *Christ*, they live a Divine Life, and have glorious Communications from Heaven in secret daily; they make daily Visits to the Court of Glory, and are visited by condescending Grace.

You see in all these Instances, that *Popularity and Show* are not at all necessary for a *Christian*.

Vth Inference. *How exceeding difficult is it for those who are exalted to great and publick Stations in the World, to maintain lively Christianity! They have need of great and uncommon Degrees of Grace to maintain this hidden Life. How hardly shall they that have Riches enter into the Kingdom of God! These are our Saviour's own Words, Mark x. 23. and he gave this Reason for it, ver. 24. because 'tis so hard for those that have Riches, not to trust in them, not to live entirely upon them, and make them their very Life.*

How hard is it for Men in high Posts of Honour, to take due Care that their Graces thrive, while they are all Day engaged, either in the Fatigues of Office, in State and Pomp of their own, or in everlasting Attendances on the Will of some Superior; so that they have few Moments in a Day, wherein they are capable of retiring, and holding any Converse with themselves or with Heaven.

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But O! how pleasant is it to such as are advanced in the Providence of God, and have a Value for their hidden Life, to steal an Hour of Retirement from the Burden of their publick Cares! How sweet is the Recovery of a few Minutes, and how well fill'd up with active Devotion! The secret Life of a Christian grows much in the Closter, and without a Retreat from the World it cannot grow. Abandon the secret Chamber, and the Spiritual Life will decay: Doubtless many of you can witness that you have found it so; and your own mournful Experience echoes to the Words of our Ministry in this Point.

There was an antient Philosopher, who, when he had lost his Riches in a Storm at Sea, gave Thanks to *Providence*, under a *Heathen* Name; *I thank thee, Fortune, that hast now forced me to retire, and to live within my Cloke*; that is, upon the *Supports of Philosophy*, in meaner Circumstances of Life. How much more should the Christian be pleased with a private Station, who has the *Supports of the Gospel* to live upon, and to sweeten his Retirements!

How cautious should Christians be, therefore, of the Management of all the publick Affairs of their civil Life, lest they do any thing that should hurt their secret or religious Life! We should be still enquiring, "Will such sort of Company to which I
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“ am now invited ; such a gainful Trade
 “ which I am ready to engage in ; such a
 “ Course of Life which now lies before me ;
 “ tempt me to neglect my secret Converse
 “ with God ? Does it begin to alienate
 “ my Heart from Heaven, and Things un-
 “ seen ? then let me suspect and fear it.”

Be afraid, Christians, of what grieves the Blessed Spirit of *Christ*, who is the Principle of your Life, and may provoke him to retire from you. Be diligent in such Enquiries, be very watchful and jealous of every Thing that would call your Thoughts outward, and keep them too long abroad. Christians should live much at home, for their's is a *Hidden Life*.

Vith Inference. *We may see here divine Wisdom in contriving the Ordinances of the Gospel, with such Plainness, and such Simplicity, as best serves to promote the hidden Life of a Christian.* Pomp and Ceremony, gilded and sparkling Ornaments, are ready to call the Soul abroad, to employ it in the Senses, and divert it from that spiritual Improvement, which the secret Life of a Christian requires, and which Gospel-Institutions were designed for.

You see in the *Heathen* World, and you see in *Popish* Countries, that the gay Splendors of Worship tempt the Hearts of the Worshippers to rest in Forms, and to forget God ; and we may fear that the greatest

Part of the People lay under the same Danger, in the Days of *Judaism*.

I grant indeed, that where pompous and glittering Rites of Religion are of special divine Appointment, and were designed to typify the future Glories of a more spiritual Church and Worship; there they might hope for divine Aids to lead their Minds onward beyond the Type, to those designed Glories. But carnal Worshippers are the Bulk of any Sect or Profession. All Mankind, by Nature, is ready to take up with the Forms of Godliness, and neglect the secret Power. We naturally pay too much Reverence to shining Formalities and empty Shows. Set a Christian to read the most spiritual Parts of the Gospel, on one Page of the Bible, and let some Scene of the History be finely graven, and painted on the opposite Side; his holy Meditations will be indanger'd by his Eyes; fair Figures and Colours attract the Sight, and tempt the Soul off from refined Devotion.

I cannot think it any Advantage to Christian Worship, to have Churches well adorned by the Statuary and the Painter; nor can gay Altar-pieces improve the Communion-Service. While gawdy glittering Images attract and entertain the outward Sense, the Soul is too much attached to the Animal, to keep it self at a Distance; while the Sight is regaled and feasted, the Sermon runs to waste,

waste, and the hidden Life withers and starves. When the Ear is sooth'd with a Variety of fine Harmony, the Soul is too often allured away from spiritual Worship, even though a divine Song attend the Musick. Our Saviour therefore, in much Wisdom, and in much Mercy, has appointed blessed Ordinances for his Church, with such Plainness and Simplicity, as may administer most Support and Nourishment to the secret Life.

Thus I have finished the *Remarks* on the hidden Life of a Christian, considered as to its *Spiritual Exercises* in this present World.

I proceed to consider, *In what Respects this Life is hidden*, as it is more usually called *Eternal Life*, or to be exercised and enjoy'd in Heaven.

And here we must confess, that we are much at a Loss to say any thing more than the Scripture hath said before us. *Life and Immortality*, indeed, *are brought to Light by the Gospel of Christ*, in far brighter Measures than the former Ages and Dispensations were acquainted with; 1 *Tim.* i. 10. But still, what the Apostle says concerning all the Blessings of the Gospel, we may repeat emphatically concerning Heaven, *That Eye hath not seen, that Ear hath not heard, that it hath not entred into the Heart of Man to conceive*; nor indeed hath God himself revealed but

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but a very small Part of the *Things he hath prepared*, in the future World, for them that love him. It doth not yet appear what we shall be; the Glory of that State is yet a great Secret to us; 1 *John* iii. 2. We know much better what it is not, than what it is: We can define it best by *Negatives*. Absence from the Weaknesses, Sins, and Sorrows of this Life, is our best and largest Account of it, whether we speak of the *separate Heaven*, or the Heaven of the Resurrection.

The Vail of *Flesh and Blood* divides us from the *World of Spirits*; we know not the Manner of their Life in the State of Separation; we are at an utter Loss as to their Stations and Residences; what relation they bear to any Part of this material Creation; whether they dwell in thin airy Vehicles, and are Inhabitants of some starry World, or planetary Regions; or whether they subsist in their pure intellectual Nature, and have nothing to do with any Thing corporeal, till their Dust be recalled to Life. We are unacquainted with the Laws by which they are governed, and the Methods of their Converse; We know little of the Businesses they are employed in, those glorious Services for their God and their Saviour, in which they are favour'd with assistant Angels; and little are we acquainted with their Joys, which are *unspeakable, and full of Glory*. The very Language of that World,
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is neither to be spoken, nor understood by us; *St. Paul* heard some of the Words of it, and had a faint Glimpse of the Sense of them; but he could not repeat them again to mortal Ears; nor had he Power, nor Leave, to tell us the Meaning of them. *2 Cor. xii. 4.* For, whether he was in the Body, at that Time, or out of the Body, he himself was not able to determine.

And as for the *Heaven of the Resurrection*; what sort of Bodies shall be raised from the Dust, for perfect Spirits to dwell in, is as great a Secret. A *Spiritual Body* is a Mystery to the wisest Divines and Philosophers; where our Habitation shall be, and what our special Employment through the endless Ages of Immortality, are among the hidden Unsearchables. The most that we know, is, that we shall be made like to *Christ*, and we shall be where he is, to behold his Glory; *1 John iii. 2.* and *John xvii. 24.*

If the eternal Life of the Saints be so much a Secret at present, we may draw these two or three Inferences from it.

1st Inference. *How necessary is it for a Christian to keep Faith awake and lively, that he may maintain his Acquaintance with the spiritual and unseen World!* 'Tis Faith that converses with Invisibles; Faith is the Substance of Things hoped for, and the Evidence of Things not seen, *Heb. xi. 1.* 'Tis Faith that deals in hidden Traffick, and grows rich in Treas-

Treasures that are out of Sight. 'Tis by Faith in the Son of God, we live this spiritual Life, by Faith in an absent Saviour; Gal. ii. 20. *Whom having not seen, we love; and tho' we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice;* 1 Pet. i. 8.

Let the Christian, therefore, maintain a holy Jealousy, lest too much Converse with the Things of Sense, dull the Eye of his Faith, or weaken the Hand of it. Let him put his Faith into perpetual Exercise, that he may live within the View of those Glories that are hidden from Sense; that he may keep his Hold of eternal Life; that he may support his Hopes, and secure his Joys. Until we can live *by Sight*, let us walk *by Faith*, 1 Cor. v. 7.

Though the Life of Heaven be hidden, yet so much of it is revealed, as to give Faith leave to lay hold of it; and yet not so much, as to make the Hand of Faith needless. 'Tis brought down by our Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospel, within the View of Faith, that we might live in Expectation of it, and be animated to the glorious Pursuit; but 'tis not brought within the Reach of Sense, for we are now in a State of Tryal; and this is not the proper Time nor Place for Sight and Enjoyment.

II^d Inference. *How little is Death to be dreaded by a Believer, since it will bring the Soul to the full Possession of its hidden Life in Heaven!*

ven! 'Tis a dark Valley that divides between this World and the next; but 'tis all a Region of Light and Blessedness beyond it. We are now Borderers on the eternal World, and we know but little of that invisible Country. Approaching Death opens the Gates to us, and begins to give our holy Curiosity some secret Satisfaction; And yet how we shrink backward when that glorious unknown City is opening upon us! and are ready to beg and pray that the Gates might be closed again: "*O! for a little more Time, a little longer Continuance in this lower visible World!*" This is the Language of the fearful Believer: But 'tis better to have our Christian Courage wrought up to a divine Height, and to say, "*Open ye everlasting Gates, and be ye lift up, O ye immortal Doors, that we may enter into the Place where the King of Glory is.*"

There shall we see God, the great Unknown, and rejoice in his overflowing Love. We shall see him not as we do on Earth, darkly, *through the Glass* of Ordinances; but inferior Spirits shall converse with the supreme Spirit, as Bodies do with Bodies; that is, *Face to Face*, 1 Cor. xiii.

There shall we behold *Christ* our Lord in the Dignity of his Character as Mediator, in the Glory of his Kingdom, and the All-sufficiency of his Godhead; and we shall be for ever with him. There shall we see
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Millions of blessed Spirits, who have lived the same hidden Life as we do, and passed thro' this Vale of Tears, with the same attending Difficulties and Sorrows, and by the same divine Assistances. They were unknown, and cover'd with Dust as we are, while they dwelt in Flesh, but they appear all-glorious and well-known in the World of Spirits, and exult in open and immortal Light: We shall see them, and we shall triumph with them in that Day; we shall learn their Language, and taste their Joys: We shall be Partakers of the same Glory, which *Christ our Life* diffuses all around him, on the blessed Inhabitants of that intellectual World.

III^d Inference. How glorious is the Difference between the two Parts of the Christian's Life, (viz.) the spiritual Life on Earth, and the Perfection of eternal Life in Heaven; when all that is now hidden, shall be revealed before Men and Angels!

Come now, and let us take occasion from this Discourse, to let loose our Meditations one Stage beyond Death and the separate State; even to the Morning of the Resurrection, and the full and publick Assembly of all the Saints. O what an illustrious Appearance! What a numerous and noble Army of new Creatures! Creatures that were *hidden* in this World among the common Herd of Mankind, and their Bodies *hidden* in the Grave, and mingled with common Dust, rising all at once, at the Sound of a Trumpet, into publick Light and Glory;

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the same Persons, indeed, that once inhabited Mortality, but in far different Equipage and Array.

The Christian, on Earth, is like the rough Diamond among the common Pebbles of the Shore; in the Resurrection-day the Diamond is cut and polish'd, and set in a Tablet of Gold. All that inward Worth and Lustre of Holiness and Grace, which are now hidden, shall be then visible and publick before the Eyes of the whole Creation. Then the Saints shall be known by their shining, *in the Day when the Lord makes up his Jewels*, Mal. iii. 17.

When the *Spirits of the Just made perfect* in all the Beauties of Holiness, shall return to their former Mansions, and become Men again; when their *Bodies are raised* from the Dust, *in the Likeness of the Body* of our blessed Lord, how shall all the *Saints shine in the Kingdom of their Father*, though in the Kingdoms of this World they were obscure and undistinguish'd! They shall appear, in that Day, as the Meridian Sun breaking from a long and dark Eclipse; and the Sun is too bright a Being to be unknown; *Matth. xiii. 43.*

What is there in a poor Saint here, that discovers what he shall be hereafter? How mean his Appearance now! How magnificent in that Day! What was there in *Lazarus* on the Dunghill, *when the Dogs lick'd his Sores*, that could

could lead us to any Thought what he should be in the *Bosom of Abraham*? What is there in the Martyrs and Confessors, described in the 11th of *Hebrews*; those holy Men, with their *Sheep-skins*, and their *Goat-skins* upon them, wandering in *Desarts*, and hidden in *Dens and Caves of the Earth*? What was there in these poor and miserable Spectacles that looks like a Saint in *Glory*? or that could give us any Intimation what they shall be in the great *Rising-Day*?

Now we are the *Sons of God*, but it does not appear what we shall be; 1 John iii. 1, 2. We can show no Pattern of it here below. Shall we go to the Palaces of *Eastern Princes*, and borrow their Crowns and sparkling Attire, to show how the Saints are drest in *Heaven*? Shall we take the Marble Pillars, their Roofs of Cedar, their costly Furniture of Purple and Gold, to describe the Mansions of *Immortality*? Shall we attend the Chariot of some *Roman General*, with all the Ensigns of Victory, leading on his Legions to *Triumph*, and fetch Robes of Honour, and Branches of Palm, to describe that triumphant Army of *Christian Conquerors*? The Scripture makes use of these Resemblances, indeed, in great Condescension, to represent the Glories of that Day, because they are the brightest Things we know on Earth. But they sink as far below the Splendors of the Resurrection, as Earth is below Heaven, or Time is shorter than Eternity.

What is all the dead Lustre of Metals, and Silks, and shining Stones, to the living Rays of Divine Grace springing up, and shooting into full Glory? Faith into Sight, Hope into Enjoyment, Patience into Joy and Victory, and Love into its own Perfection? Then all the hidden Vertues and Graces of the Saints, shall appear like the Stars at Midnight, in an unclouded Sky. Then shall it be made known to all the World, these were the Men that wept and pray'd in secret; it shall be publish'd then in the great Assembly, these were the Persons who wrestled hard with their secret Sins, that fought the Face of God, and his Strength, in their private Chambers, and they are made *more than Overcomers thro' him that hath loved them*. The poor trembling Christian who liv'd this hidden and divine Life, but scarce knew it himself, nor durst appear among the Churches on Earth, shall lift up his Head, and rejoice amidst the Church triumphant; and the hidden Seed of Grace, that was water'd with so many secret Tears, shall spring up into a rich and illustrious Harvest. This is the Day which shall *bring to Light* a thousand Works of hidden Piety, for the eternal Honour of Christ and the Saints; as well as *the hidden Things of Darkness*, to the Sinner's everlasting Confusion, *Matth. xxv. and 1 Cor. iv. 5.*

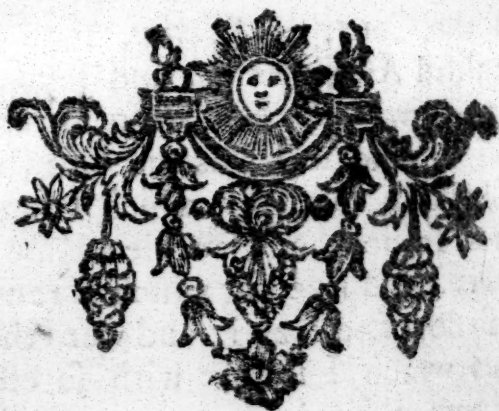
Thus the *Spiritual Life* of Christians, which was concealed in this World, shall appear in
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the other in full Brightness; and they themselves shall be amazed to see what divine Honours, *Jesus* the Judge shall cast upon their poor secret Services and Sufferings.

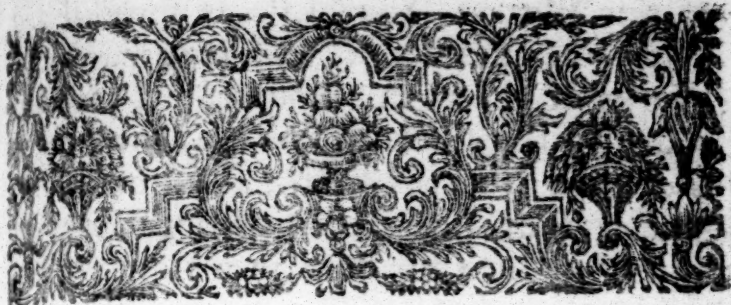
But in what supreme Glory shall their Life display it self, when both Parts of the human Compound are rejoin'd after so long a Separation! This is *Life eternal* indeed, and Joy unspeakable. How gloriously shall the Perfections and Honours, both of Body and Mind, unfold themselves, and rise far above all that they heard, or saw, or could conceive! Each of them surpriz'd, like the Queen of *Sheba* in the Court of *Solomon*, shall confess with thankful Astonishment and Joy, that *not one half of it was told them*, even in the Word of God. "And was this the Crown, shall the Christian say, for which I fought on Earth-at so poor and feeble a Rate? And was this the Prize for which I ran with a Pace so slow and lazy? And were these the Glories which I fought with so cold and indifferent a Zeal in yonder World? O shameful Indifference! O surprizing Glories! O undeserved Prize and Crown! Had I imagined how bright the Blessing was, which lay *hidden* in the Promise, surely all my Powers had been animated to a warmer Pursuit. Could I have seen what I ought to have believed; had I but taken in all that was told me concerning *this Glorious and Eternal Life*, surely I would have
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“ventured thro’ many Deaths to secure the
“Possession of it. O guilty Negligence!
“and criminal Unbelief! But thy sovereign
“Mercy, O my God, has pardon’d both,
“and made me Possessor of the fair Inheri-
“tance. Behold, I bow at thy Feet for ever,
“and adore the Riches of overflowing
“Grace.” *Amen.*



SER.



S E R M O N X.

The Hidden Life of a Christian.

COL. iii. 3.

*Ye are dead, and your Life is hid with
Christ in God.*

The Second Part.

IT IS to the Christian Converts, who were at *Colosse*, that the Apostle addresses himself, in this strange Language: *Ye are dead*, and yet I tell you where *your Life* is. This Divine Writer delights sometimes to surprize his Readers, by joining such Opposites, and uniting such distant Extremes. But can a dead Person have any Life in him? Yes, and a noble one too. *Ye are dead* to the World, and dead to Sin, but *ye have a Life* of another Kind than that which belongs to the Sinners of

of this World: Your Life is spiritual and holy; theirs is sinful, and engaged in the Works of the Flesh: Your Life is heavenly, and seeks the Things which are above; theirs is derived from the Earth, and grovels in the Dust: Your Life is everlasting, for your Souls shall live for ever in a glorious State, and your Bodies shall be raised from Death into equal Immortality, and a Partnership of the same Glory; but their best Life is only a temporal one, and when that is at an End, all their Joys, and their Hopes are for ever at an End too, and their eternal Sorrows begin.

But *this Life of a Christian is a hidden Life.* That was the *first Doctrine* I rais'd from the Text. Both the Operations and the Springs of it, are a Secret to the World, and the future Glories of it (when it is most properly called eternal Life) are still a greater Secret, and much more unknown: Yet, saith the Apostle, I can acquaint you where the Springs of it lie, and whence all the future Glories of it are to be deriv'd; they are *hidden in God, with our Lord Jesus Christ.* Now by giving so short a Hint, in a Word or two, where *this our Life is hid*, he has said something greater, and brighter, and more sublime, concerning it, than if he had shown us, from a high Mountain, at Noon-day, all the Kingdoms of this World, with all the dazzling Glories of them, and then pointed downward, *There your Life is.* Let

Let this therefore be the *Second Doctrine*, and the Subject of our present Meditations, that *The Life of a Christian is hidden with Christ in God.* 'Tis hidden in God, as the first original and eternal Spring of it, and entrusted with Christ as a faithful Mediator; 'tis hid in God, where our Lord *Jesus Christ* is, and he is appointed to take care of it for us; for he also is called *our Life*, ver. 4.

The Method I shall take for the Improvement of this Truth, is, to explain these Words of the Apostle more at large, and then deduce some Inferences from them.

The *first Enquiry* will arise, In what Respect the Christian's Life is said to be *hidden in God?* and *Secondly*, What is meant by its being *hidden with Christ?*

I. First, *In what Respect is the Life of a Christian said to be hidden in God?*

The Word **G O D** is taken in Scripture, either in general for the *Divine Nature*, which is common to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; or in particular, for the *Person of the Father.* And I do not see any absolute Necessity to determine, precisely, which was the Meaning of the Apostle in this Place. The *three Particulars* by which I shall endeavour to explain it, will include both. The Life of a Christian is hidden in God; that is, in the *All-sufficiency of the Divine Nature*, in

the Purpose of the Divine Will, and in the secret Engagements of the Father to his Son Jesus Christ, in the Covenant of Redemption.

I. *The Christian's Life is hidden in the All-sufficiency of the Divine Nature.* And there are immense Stores of Life, of every Kind, hidden in God, in this Sense. This whole World of Beings, that have, and have not Souls, with all the infinite Varieties of the Life of Plants, Animals, and Angels, were hidden in this fruitful and inexhaustible Fund of the Divine All-sufficiency, before God began to create a World. All Things were then hidden in God; for *of him are all Things, and from him all Things proceeded, Rom. xi. 36.* Now this *All-sufficiency* of God consists in those Powers and Perfections, whereby he is able to do all Things for his Creatures, and ready to do all for his Saints; these are most eminently *his Wisdom, his Almightyness, and his Goodness.*

There are unconceivable Riches of *Goodness and Grace* in God, which are employed in furnishing out *Life* for all his Saints; and all the unknown Preparations of future *Glory*, are the Effects of his Grace. Ephes. ii. 4. *God who is rich in Mercy, for his great Love wherewith he loved us, when we were dead in Sins, hath quickned us together with Christ; and he did it for this Purpose, that in the Ages to come, he might shew the exceeding Riches of his Grace,*

in his Kindness towards us thro' Christ Jesus, ver.

7. Not all the Goodness that appears in the rich Provision he hath made for all the natural World of Creatures, nor all the overflowing Bounties of his Providence, since the first Creation, are equal to those unsearchable Treasures of Mercy and Goodness, which he hath employ'd for the spiritual Welfare, and eternal Life and Happiness, of his own chosen Children; and in the Secret of this Grace, were all the Blessings of his Covenant hidden from Eternity.

The *Divine Wisdom* is another Part of his *All-sufficiency*. There are in God infinite Varieties of Thought and Counsel, Riches of Knowledge, and Wisdom unsearchable; and he hath made these abound in his New Creation, as well as in the Old; in the supernatural, as well as in the natural World. Ephes. i. 8. *He hath abounded towards us Sinners, in this Work of Salvation, in all Wisdom and Prudence.* What surprizing Wisdom appears in the vital Powers of an Animal, even in the Life of Brutes that perish? What glorious Contrivance, and divine Skill, to animate Clay, and make a Fly, a Dog, or a Lion of it? What sublime Advances of Wisdom to create a living Man, and join these two distinct Extremes, *Flesh and Spirit*, in such a vital Union, that has puzzled the Philosophers of all Ages, and

and constrained some of them to confess and adore a God? And what a superior Work of Divinity is it, to turn a dead Sinner into a living Saint, here on Earth? and then to adorn a Heaven, with all its proper Furniture, for the eternal Life and Habitation of his Sons and his Daughters? What divine Skill is requited here? What immense Profusion of Wisdom, to form Bodies of Immortality and Glory, for every Saint, out of the Dust of the Grave, and the Ashes of martyr'd Christians? Our Spiritual and our Eternal Life are hid in the Wisdom of God.

The Power of God, is his *All-sufficiency* too. The Power that quickens and raises a Soul to this Divine Life, must be Almighty; *Ephes. i. 19, 20.* 'Tis the same exceeding Greatness of his Power that works in us who believe, which wrought in our Lord Jesus Christ, when he raised him from the Dead, and set him at his own Right Hand in heavenly Places. 'Tis the same powerful Word that commanded the Light to shine out of Darkness, that shone into our Hearts, when he wrought the Knowledge of Christ there; *2 Cor. iv. 6.* and when he commanded us, who lay among the Dead, to awake, and arise, and live. Was it not a noble Instance of Power, to spread abroad these Heavens of unknown Circumference, with all the rolling Worlds of Light in them, the Planets and the Stars? And

And the same Hand is mighty enough (if these were not sufficient) to build a brighter Heaven, fit for the Saints to live in during all their Immortality, and to furnish them with vital Powers that shall be incorruptible and everlasting.

Thus the Life of the Saints is hidden in the *Almightiness* of God, as well as in his *Wisdom* and *Goodness*. Thus it is contained in the *All-sufficiency* of the *Divine Nature*, and each Part of it is ready to be produced into Act, in every proper Season.

2. *The Life of a Christian is hidden in the Purposes of the divine Will.* And in this Sense, the whole Gospel, with all its wondrous Glories and Mysteries, is said to be hid in God, Ephes. iii. 9. When St. Paul preached among the *Gentiles* the *unsearchable Riches of Christ*, he made all Men see something of that Mystery, which from the Beginning of the World had been hid in God. And if this be compared with Ephes. i. 9. we shall find that this Mystery of the Will, or *Good-Pleasure of God*, was that which he *eternally purposed in himself*.

There is not one dead Sinner is awakened, and called into this *divine and spiritual Life* here, or that shall ever be possessed of *Life eternal* hereafter, but it was contained in the eternal secret Purpose, and merciful Design of God, before the World began. For 'tis a very mean Conceit, and

a disgraceful Opinion concerning the great God, to imagine that he should exert his Power to work *Life* in Souls, here in Time, by any new Purposes, or sudden Designs, (occasioned by any Works or Merit of theirs) which he had not formed and decreed in himself, long before he made Man. This Doctrine would represent God as a *mutable* Being; but we know that he is *unchangeable*. There is nothing new in God; and his *Inmutability* is that Perfection of his Nature which secures the Performance of this *divine Purpose*, and the *Life* of every Christian.

3. I might add, in the third Place, that *the Life of a Christian is hidden in the unknown Engagements of the Father to his Son Jesus Christ the Mediator*. That sacred and divine Transaction betwixt the Father and the Son, is often intimated in the holy Scriptures, and some of the Promises of that Covenant are there represented, *Psalm lxxxix. 19, &c. I have laid Help upon one that is mighty; My Mercy will I keep for him for ever, and my Covenant shall stand fast with him: his Seed will I make to endure for ever, and his Throne as the Days of Heaven; ver. 28, 29, 36, &c.* Then when the Covenant of Peace was between them both, as 'tis expressed in *Zechariah vi. 12*, then did the Father promise that he should have a Seed to serve him, *Psalm xxiii. 30.* and this must be a *living Seed*, and they must

must be raised up from among dead Sinners, and they shall be made living Saints in the World of Grace, and in the World of Glory.

Many of these Promises are transcribed, as it were, into the Covenant of Grace, and they are written down in Scripture for our present Consolation and Hope; and many others are, doubtless, concealed from all but Jesus the Mediator; they are hidden from Men and Angels, and reserved to be known, by surprizing Accomplishment, in the future bright Ages, beyond the Date of Time, and to entertain the long Successions of our Eternity.

Now *the Truth and Faithfulness of God* are those Attributes of his Nature which secure this Covenant, and all the divine Engagements of it; both those which are revealed to the Children of Men, and those that are known only to the Son and the Father: But it is sufficiently evident, that all the Degrees and Powers of the spiritual and eternal Life of the Saints, with all the Graces, Glories and Blessings that shall ever attend them, are hidden and laid up in these sacred Engagements and Promises.

II. This leads me to the *Second Enquiry*; and that is, *What is meant by these Words, With Christ, in my Text? and how the Christian Life is hid with Christ?*

If I would branch this into three Particulars also, I should expresse them thus :

1. *Our Life is hidden with Christ, as he is the great Treasurer and Dispenser of all divine Benefits to the Children of Men.* This is the high Office to which the Father hath appointed him ; and this is the Character that he sustains ; and he is abundantly furnished for the execution of this great Trust. In this Sense, all the Stores of Life and Blessing, that ever shall be bestowed on the sinful Race of *Adam*, are laid up in the Hands of *Christ*, the Son of God. *It hath pleased the Father that in him all Fulness should dwell*, Colos. i. 19. And he was full of *Grace and Truth*, that of his Fulness we might receive Grace for Grace, 1 John xiv. 16. That is, a variety of Graces and Blessings answerable to that rich Variety, with which our Lord *Jesus Christ*, the High-Treasurer of Heaven, was furnished from the Hands of the Father. And to this Purpose, perhaps, John v. 26. may be interpreted, compared with ver. 21. *As the Father hath Life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have Life in himself ; that as the Father raiseth up the Dead, and quickneth them, even so the Son may quicken whom he will.*

The blessed Spirit it self, as it is the great Promise of the New Testament, and the glorious Gift of God to Men, was communicated to the Son, and by him bestowed
upon

upon us; for he went to Heaven *to receive the Promise of the Spirit from the Father*, and *he shed it forth* upon the Apostles and the Believers; *Acts. ii. 33.* 'Tis this Spirit who gave miraculous Gifts to them heretofore, that is the immediate Principle, or Worker, of divine Life in dead Souls now: And 'tis *by this same Spirit, that he shall raise our dead Bodies from the Grave, Rom. viii. 11.* He is the Spring of our spiritual and eternal Life; and he is dispensed to us from the Father, by the Hands of the Son.

And here 'tis proper to take Notice of the special Manner wherein the Lord *Jesus Christ* is the Treasurer, or Keeper of Life, and all divine Benefits, for the Saints, and becomes the Dispenser thereof to his People: He is ordained to stand in the Relation of a *Head* to them, and they are *his Body, his Members*. Thus our Life is hidden with *Christ*, as he is the *vital Head of all his Saints*. Their Life is hid with *Christ*, as the Spirits and Springs of Life, for all the Members in the natural Body are said to be contained in the Head. *Christ is the Head of his own mystical Body, Ephes. iv. 14, 16. from whom the whole Body, fitly joined together, maketh Encrease to its own Edification:* 'tis the same vital Spirit that runs thro' Head and Members. *He that is joined to the Lord, is one Spirit; 1 Cor. vi. 17.* and therefore partakes of the same Life.

Thus

Thus you see, that tho' the Life of a Christian is *hidden in God*, in the All-sufficiency of his Nature, and the Purposes of his Will; yet our Lord *Jesus Christ*, as Mediator, is entrusted to keep it for him, and dispense it to him.

2. *Our Life is hid with Christ, as he is our Forerunner, and the Possessor of Life, spiritual and eternal, in our Name.* And this may be described in a variety of Instances, according to the various Parts, as well as the several advancing Degrees of our spiritual Life, and the Perfection of it in Life eternal.

When *his human Nature* was first formed compleat in Holiness, it was a Pledge and Assurance, that we should one Day be compleatly holy too; for, as is the Head, so must the Members be. In the Original Sanctification of his Spirit, Flesh, and Blood, we may read the certain future Sanctification of every believing Soul, with its Body too. See *John xvii. 19. & Heb. ii. 11.*

Again; *When his Body* was raised from the Dead, it was a Pledge and Pattern of our being raised from a Death in Sin, unto the spiritual Life of a Saint, as well as a certain Assurance of the Resurrection of our Bodies into future Glory. The first is evident from *Ephes. ii. 6. When we were dead in Sin, he hath quickned us together with Christ.* And *Rom. vi. 4. As Christ was raised up from the Dead by the Glory of the Father, even so we must also*
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walk in Newness of Life ; for we are planted in the Likeness of his Resurrection, ver. 5.

And in the 1 Cor. xv. 12, &c. the Apostle builds his whole Argument of the Resurrection of the Bodies of Saints who are dead, from the Rising of our Lord *Jesus Christ* out of his Grave: *For Christ being risen from the Dead, ver. 20. is become the First-Fruits of them that slept.* And as all that are united to Adam, by having him for their Head, must die ; so all who are one with Christ, and have him for their Head, shall be made alive : which seems to be the Meaning of the 22d Verse ; *As in Adam all dy'd, so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

When he ascended into the Heavens, it was not merely in his own Name, but in ours too, to take Possession of the Inheritance for the Saints in Light. Heb. vi. 20. *Our Hope enters within the Vail, whither Jesus the Forerunner is for us entered.* And when he sat down at the Right-Hand of God in the heavenly Places, it was as the great Exemplar of our future Advancement, and thereby gave us Assurance that we should sit down there too : and therefore the Apostle, in the Language of Faith, anticipates these divine Honours, and applies them to the *Ephesians* beforehand : *God hath raised us up together, says he, with Christ, and hath made us sit together in heavenly Places in Christ Jesus.*

It was through the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, that Jesus, the great Shepherd of the Sheep, was brought again from the Dead: and it was the God of Peace who raised him, Heb. xiii. 20. And it is by virtue of his own Blood, and perfect Righteousness, that he, who once took our Sins upon him, is now discharged: 'Tis through his own Sufferings that he appears with Acceptance before the Throne, and enjoys a divine Life in the unchangeable Favour of God; and all this as our Head, Surety, and Representative, giving us Assurance hereby, that we, through the Blood of the same Covenant, shall be brought again from the Dead too; that we through the Virtue of the same Righteousness, and All-sufficiency of the same Sacrifice, shall appear hereafter before God in Glory, and stand in his eternal Favour; and as an Earnest of it, we enjoy a Life of holy Peace and Acceptance with God in this World, through the same all-sufficient Blood and Righteousness: For he appears in the Holy of Holies, in Heaven it self, in the Presence of God for us, Heb. ix. 24. He secures all the Glories and Blessings of spiritual and eternal Life for us, as he has taken Possession of them in our Name.

3. *Our Life of Grace, and especially our Life of Glory, may be said to be hidden with Christ, because he dwells in Heaven, where God resides in Glory; God, in whom is our Life.*

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He is set down on the Right-hand of the Majesty on high, Heb. xii. 2. There our eternal Life is. The Things which are above, are the Objects of our joyful Hope, where Christ is at the Right-hand of God, Colos. iii. 1. 'Tis the short, but sublime Description of our Heaven, that we shall be present with the Lord, we shall be where Christ is, to behold his Glory; 2 Cor. v. 8. and John xvii. 24. And shall possess all that unknown and rich Variety of Blessings which are reserved for us in heavenly Places, whither Christ our Lord is ascended.

Thus I have endeavoured to explain, in the largest and most comprehensive Sense, what we are to understand by the Life of a Christian hidden with Christ in God: 'Tis reserved in the All-sufficiency, the Purposes, and the Engagements of God, under the Care of the Mediator, and in the Presence of Christ.

The Use I shall make of this Doctrine, is, to draw Four Inferences from it for our Instruction, and Three for our Consolation.

The Inferences for our Instruction are such as these;

1st Instruction. *What a glorious Person is the poorest, meanest Christian?* He lives by Communion with God the Father, and the Son; for his Life is hid with Christ in God. 1 John i. 3. *Truly our Fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ: And these Things we write*

write to you, that your Joy may be full; the Joy that you may justly derive from so glorious an Advancement.

A true Christian does not live upon the Creatures, but upon the infinite and almighty Creator; upon *God who created all Things by Jesus Christ*. Created Beings were never design'd to be his Life and his Happiness; they are too mean and coarse a Fare for a Christian to feed upon, in order to support his best Life: He converses with them indeed, and transacts many Affairs that relate to them in this lower World: While he dwells in Flesh and Blood, his heavenly Father has appointed these to be a great Part of his Business; but he does not make them his Portion and his Life. They possess but the lower Degrees of his Affection: *He rejoices in the Possession of them, as though he rejoiced not; and he weeps for the Loss of them, as though he wept not*: He enjoys the dearest Comforts of Life, *as though he had them not; and buys with such a holy Indifference, as though he were not to possess*; 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30. *for the Fashion of them passes away*: But the Food of his Life is infinite and immortal. 'Tis no wonder that a Man of this World lets loose all the Powers of his Soul in the Pursuit and Enjoyment of Creatures, for they are his Portion and his Life. But 'tis quite otherwise with a Christian: he has a nobler Original, and sustains a higher

higher Character : His divine Life must have divine Food to support it.

Let our Thoughts take a Turn to some bare Common, or to the Side of a Wood, and visit the humble Christian there ; we shall find him chearful, perhaps, at his Dinner of Herbs, with all the Circumstances of Meanness around him : But what a glorious Life he leads in that Straw-Cottage, and poor Obscurity ! The great and gay World shut him out from them with Disdain : He lives, as it were, *hidden in a Cave of the Earth* ; but the Godhead dwells with him there. *The high and lofty One that inhabits Eternity*, comes down to dwell with the humble and contrite Soul ; *Isaiah lvii. 15.* God, who is the Spring of his Life, comes down to communicate fresh Supplies of this Life continually. *He that dwells in Love, dwells in God, 1 John iv. 16.* *He is not alone, for the Father is with him.* The Father and the Son come and manifest themselves unto him, within the Walls of that Hovel, in so divine a Manner, as they never do to the Men of this World, in their Robes and Palaces ; *John xiv. 22, 23.* And that he may have the Honour of the Presence of the blessed Trinity, *his Body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost, 1 Cor. iii. 16. and vi. 19.* O ! the wonderful Condescensions of divine Grace, and the surprizing Honours that are done to a humble Saint ! How is his Habitation grac'd !

grac'd ! Heaven is there, for God and Christ are there ; and who knows what heavenly Guards surround him ? what Flights of attending Angels ? *Are they not all ministering Spirits, sent down to minister unto them that shall be Heirs of Salvation ?* Heb. i. 14. But our Lord Jesus Christ is now unseen, God and Angels are unseen ; the Christians Company belong to the invisible World : He lives a hidden, but a divine Life ; *His Life is hid with Christ in God.*

IId. Instruction. See how it comes to pass that Christians are capable of doing such Wonders, at which the World stands amazed. The Spring of their Life is almighty ; 'tis hid in God. 'Tis by this divine Strength they subdue their sinful Natures, their stubborn Appetites, and their old corrupt Affections : 'Tis by the Power of God, derived through Jesus Christ, they bend the Powers of their Souls unto a Conformity to all the Laws of God and Grace ; and they yield their Bodies as Instruments to the same holy Service, while the World wonders at them, that they should fight against their own Nature, and be able to overcome it too.

And as they deny themselves, in all the alluring Instances of sinful Pleasure, under the influence of almighty Grace, so they endure Sufferings, in the sharpest Degree, from the Hands of God, without murmuring. And when they have laboured Night and Day,

day, and performed surprizing Services for God in the World, they are yet contented to submit to smarting and heavy Trials from the Hands of their heavenly Father, without being angry against their God; for they know he loves them, and he designs *all Things shall work together for their good.*

Besides all this, they bear dreadful Persecutions, cruel Mockings, and Scourgings, and Tortures, from the Hands of Men, and go through all the Sorrows of Martyrdom. What noble Instances and Miracles of this kind did the primitive Age furnish us with, so that their Tormentors were amazed? They saw not the secret Springs of Divine Life which supported them; they knew not the Grace of God, and the Power of Christ, by which the Christians were upheld in all their Labours and their Sufferings. The Spring of their Life was almighty, but it was hidden from the Eyes of Men: It was concealed and reserved *with Christ in God.*

Read the Labours and the Sufferings of St. Paul, 2 Cor. xi. 23. *In Stripes above measure, in Prisons frequent, in Deaths often: He was beaten with Rods, he was stoned, he suffered Shipwreck, in perpetual Perils by Land and Sea, in Weariness, in Painfulness, in Watchings and Fastings, in Hunger and Thirst, in Cold and Nakedness.* One would think his Bones were Iron, and his Flesh were Brass. He was invisibly supported by Christ the Spring of

of his Life. Read his wondrous Vertues and Self-denial; *Philip. iv. 11, 12, 13. I know how to be abased, and how to abound: I can be full, and be hungry; I can possess Plenty, and I can suffer Want: I can do all Things thro' Christ strengthening me.* This was the Fountain of his Life and Strength. I acknowledge, says he, in another Place, that *I am nothing, I have no Sufficiency of my self to think so much as one good Thought: But all my Sufficiency is of God, in whom my Life is hid; 2 Cor. iii. 5.*

And with what a devout Zeal does he ascribe his Life to Christ, in that glorious Amassment of spiritual Paradoxes! *Gal. ii. 20. I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the Life which I now live in the Flesh, I live by the Faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.* Therefore I can be delivered to Death daily for Jesus Christ's Sake; troubled and perplexed, and yet not in Despair; be cast down, and not be destroy'd; because I believe that the Life of Jesus must be made manifest in my mortal Flesh, and he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise us up also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.

III^d Instruction. See whither a dead Sinner must go to attain Spiritual and Eternal Life, and whither a decaying dying Christian must go for the Recruit of his fainting Life too: 'tis to God by Jesus Christ, for 'tis all hidden with Christ in God.

In vain shall a Man who is dead in Trespases and Sins, toil and labour, and hope to attain Life any other way. God is the Spring of all Life, and he has betruſted it to the Hands of *Jeſus Chriſt*: *I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life*, ſays our Lord, John xiv. 6. No Man can have Life without coming to the living Father; and *no Man cometh to the Father but by me*. Seneca and Plato, with their Moral Lectures, and the Writings of Human Philoſophy, may give a Man new Garments, may make his outward Life appear much better than before; they may teach him, in ſome Meaſure, to govern his Paſſions too, and ſubdue ſome of the fleſhly Appetites; but they cannot raiſe him to the Love of God, to the Hatred of every Sin, to the well-grounded Hopes of the Favour of God, the bleſſed Expectation of a holy Immortality, and a Preparation for Heaven. They cannot give the Man a new Life: He muſt be born again of the Spirit of *Chriſt*, or he can never become a living Chriſtian.

And in vain would the poor backſliding Chriſtian, with his withering decaying Graces, recruit and renew his Divine Life, without applying himſelf aſreſh to *Jeſus Chriſt*: While he forgets *Chriſt*, he muſt go on to wither and decay ſtill. There is nothing in Earth or Heaven can ſupply the utter Abſence of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*.

When the Stream of spiritual Life ebbs or runs low, 'tis not to be quickned, recovered, and encreased, but by new Supplies from the Fountain which is on high. Remember, O degenerate Christian, remember whence it was you derived your first Life, when you were once dead in Trespases and Sins; fly to the Saviour by new Exercises of Faith and Dependance, mourning, in all Humility, for your unwatchful Walking, and your Absence from the Lord. Commit your Soul afresh to his Care, exert your utmost Powers, and beg of him renewed Influences of the living Spirit, that the Face of your Soul may be *like a watered Garden*, and the Beauty of the Divine Life may be recovered again.

IVth Instruction. *See the Reason why a lively Christian desires and delights to be so much, and so often, where God and Christ are; for his Life is with them.*

This was the divine Temper and Practice of the Saints under a much darker Dispensation than what we enjoy. How does the holy Soul of *David* pant and long for the Presence of God! and he brings even his animal Nature, the very Ferments of his Flesh and Blood, into his Devotions; *Psal. lxi.*

1. *My Soul thirsteth for thee, my Flesh longeth for thee. My Heart and my Flesh crieth out for the living God, Psal. lxxxiv.* 2. In all the various and fervent Language of sacred Passion and Transport,

Transport, he breathes after God, who is *the Strength of his Life, and his Salvation*, Psal xxvii.

1. The Jewish Saints cleaved to the Lord, for he was *their Life, and the Length of their Days*, Deut. xxx. 20.

And what sweet Delight does St. Paul take in mentioning the very Name of *Christ*? How does he dwell upon it in long Sentences, and loves to repeat the blessed Sound! how often does he rejoice in the Hope of dwelling with him hereafter, and persuades the *Colossians*, in this Context, to be much with him here, ver. 1. If ye are *risen with Christ*, and have derived a quickning Vertue from him to work a Divine Life in you, let your Affections ascend above, where *Christ your Life* is.

Is not a Man, whose very Soul and Life is wrapt up in Honour and Ambition, desirous ever to be near the Court? His Life flourishes under the Sun-shine of the Prince's Eye, and therefore he would fain dwell there. Does not the covetous Wretch love to be near his Hoards of Gold or Silver? He has put up his Life in his Bags, among his Treasures, and he is not willing to be far distant, nor long separated from them. Whatever a Man lives upon, he would willingly be ever near it, that so he may have the Pleasure of feeding upon what is his greatest Delight, and be refreshed and nourished by that which he feels to support him.

him. Now, what Honour is to the Ambitious, what Money is to the Covetous, what all the various Delights of Sense are to the Men of carnal Pleasure; that is God to the Saint, that is *Christ Jesus* to the Christian; and therefore he is ever desirous of such further Manifestations of God and *Christ*, that may invigorate his spiritual Life, and give him the pleasing Relish of living. Then a Man feels that he lives, when he is near to the Spring of his Life, and derives fresh Supplies from it every Moment.

Thence it is, that in every Distress or Danger, the Saints fly to God for Refuge and Relief: He is their great *Hiding-place*, *Psal. xxxii. 7.* And *Christ Jesus* is represented in Prophecy under the same Character; *Isa. xxxii. 2.* *This Man*, in whom the God-head dwells bodily, *shall be a Hiding-place from the Wind, and a Covert from the Tempest. The Name of God in Christ, is a strong Tower; the Righteous run into it, to hide themselves, and are safe; Prov. xviii. 10.* Their Life is in God, in the keeping of *Christ*, and they can defy Deaths and Dangers, when their Faith is strong, and their Thoughts are fixed above.

They know the Meaning of that tender and divine Language, *Isa. xxvi. 20.* *Come, my People, enter thou into thy Chambers, and shut thy Doors about thee; hide thy self, as it were,*
for

for a little Moment, until the Indignation be over-
past. In a Time of publick Terror, and
spreading Desolation, they retire to their se-
cret Places of Converse with God, and are
secured, at least from the Terror, if not from
the Destruction too. *When the Arrows of Death*
fly thick around them by Day, and the Pestilence
walks thro' the Streets in Darknes; when a
Thousand fall at their Side, and ten Thousand at
their Right Hand, they make the Lord their Re-
fuge, even the Most High their Habitation, and
dwell at ease in his secret Place. He covers
them from Evil, or he gives them Courage,
so that they are not afraid: They place them-
selves under the Protection of his Name;
they find shelter in his Attributes: These are
their *secret Chambers*; they hide within the Cur-
tains of his Covenant, they wrap their Souls
(as it were) in a Sheet, or rather in * a Vo-
lume of Promises; that antient Volume that
has secured the Saints in all Ages; and tho'
Death be near them, they know that their
better Life is safe: *He gives his Angels charge*
over them, to keep them on Earth, or to bear
them up to Heaven, where their Life is;
Psal. xci.

Thence it comes to pass, that we see
Christians searching after God in Ordinan-

* The Bible, of old, was written on several Sheets of
Parchment tack'd together, and rolled up in a Volume.

ces, and seeking for the Lord *Jesus Christ* in Sermons, in Prayers, in the Closet, and in the Sanctuary ; for they live upon him. A holy Soul pursues after the Presence of his God, and his Saviour, with the same Zeal of Affection and fervent Desire, that the Men of this World indulge in their Pursuit of created Good : *My Soul followeth hard after thee*, Psal. lxxiii. 8. Carnal Persons are contented to be absent from God, for he is not their Life : They can satisfy themselves with a Show of Religion, without the Power of it ; and with empty Forms of Ordinances, without *Christ* in them, because they are not born again, their Life is not spiritual. The Sinner lives upon visible Creatures, and these awaken his warmest Affections. A Saint lives upon hidden and invisible Things, upon the Hopes of Futurity, and upon the Glories that are concealed in the Promises : He lives upon the Righteousness and the Intercession of *Jesus* his Mediator, upon the Strength and Grace of *Christ*, who is his Head in Heaven ; upon the Word, the Promise, and the All-sufficiency of a God ; and therefore these are Objects of his Meditation and his Desire.

I proceed now to the *Three Inferences* for our *Consolation*.

Ist Consolation. *If our Life be hidden with God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, then 'tis in safe*

safe Hands. The Wisdom and Mercy of God have joined together, to appoint (shall I say) such a secret Repository for our spiritual Life, that it might be for ever secure. What can we have, or what can we desire more for the Safety of our best Life, than that God himself should undertake to reserve it in himself for us, and appoint his own eternal Son, in our Nature, to be the great Trustee and Surety, for his Exhibition of it in every proper Season.

Our original Life was hid in the *First Adam*; it was intrusted with *Man*, poor, feeble, inconstant *Man*, and he lost it: *He was of the Earth, earthy*, and our Life with him goes down to the Dust. Our new Life is intrusted with *Christ*; 'tis hidden in God, who is almighty and unchangeable; and therefore it can never be lost. The *Second Adam* is the *Lord from Heaven*, a *quickning Spirit*, 1 Cor. xv. 45, &c. And *he that believeth on him, tho' he were dead in Nature, yet shall he live by Grace*, for Christ is the *Resurrection and the Life*: And if he be once made spiritually alive by Christ, *he shall live for ever*. This is the Language of *Christ* himself, John xi. 25, 26.

What an unreasonable Thing is it then for a Christian to fear what Men or Devils can do against him, for they cannot hurt his best Life: 'Tis above the Reach of all the Assaults of Earth or Hell. Our Lord

Jesus teaches us not to be afraid of them who only can kill the Body; for the Soul is not in their Reach; nor is it possible for them to prevent the Body from partaking of its Share, in the glorious Life appointed for a Christian, at the great Rising-day.

We see here upon what firm Grounds the *Doctrine of a Christian's Perseverance* is built; *Christ is his Life, Jesus the same Yesterday, Today, and for ever.* The all-sufficient God, and his eternal Son, have undertaken for the Security of it; *John x. 28, 29, 30. I give unto them eternal Life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my Hand. My Father which gave them me, is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's Hand. I and my Father are one.* God hath sworn by his Holiness, that the Seed of Christ shall endure for ever; *Psal. lxxxix. 35, 36.* and that his loving Kindness shall not be utterly taken away from his own Children: And our Lord *Jesus Christ* doth little less than swear to the Perseverance of his Disciples, when he says, *John xiv. 19. Because I live, ye shall live also: for, As I live, is the Oath of God.*

Why art thou cast down, O Believer, and why is thy Soul disquieted within thee? Hope in God thy Life, for thou shalt yet praise him, how many and great soever thine Adversaries are, and how difficult soever thy Path and Duty may be, and how loud so-
ever

ever thy Foes threaten thy Destruction. There may be many Things in thy Travels through this World, that may hurt or hinder the Growth of thy spiritual Life, and may for a Season interpose, as it were, between thee and thy God; but *neither Life, nor Death, nor Principalities, nor Powers, nor Things present, nor Things to come, shall ever separate thee* intirely from him, whose Love is secured in *Jesus Christ*, Rom. viii. ult. The Disciples were much to blame, that they were overwhelmed with Terror in the midst of the Storm, while *Jesus Christ* was with them in the same Ship; and ye should chide your own Souls, when you feel your selves under such unbelieving Fears as our Lord *Jesus Christ* chid his fearful Followers: *O ye of little Faith, wherefore did ye doubt?*

Ild Consolation. What a comfortable Thought must it be to a poor feeble Christian, that God and Christ knew all the State of his spiritual Life? for 'tis hid with them. Tho' the Life of a Saint has a Cloud upon it, tho' 'tis entirely hidden from Men, and sometimes too much hidden from himself too, yet the Father and the Saviour know every Circumstance of it, how low it is, how feeble, what daily Obstacles it meets with, what hourly Enemies assault it. *Christ* our Lord well knows when our Life is in danger, and what are the necessary Supplies.

This

This is very encouraging to a poor trembling Believer, when he hardly knows how to address the Throne of Grace himself in such a Manner, as to represent all his Wants, and all his spiritual Sorrows and Difficulties to God in Prayer; but our Lord *Jesus Christ*, who is a compassionate High-Priest, who is our Head, and near a-kin to us his Members, is perfectly acquainted with our State: And the Christian, mourning under the Decays of Grace, can look up to *Christ* with Hope, he can mingle new Exercises of Faith and Dependance, among his Sighs and his Groans, and commit his Case afresh to *Jesus* his Saviour, with a humble and a holy Acquiescence in him. *Christ* himself, who is the Believer's Life, must know, and will take care of all Affairs, which relate to his spiritual and eternal Welfare.

'Tis a Matter of sweet Consolation too, when a humble Christian, who walks carefully before God, is reproached by the World for a Deceiver and a Hypocrite, that he can appeal to God, with whom his Life is hid, and say, *My Record is on High*. Though my Friends, or my Enemies, may scorn, or deride me, yet he knoweth the Way that I take, and the secret Exercises of my hidden Life: He knows my Longings and Breathings of Soul after him, and that nothing

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thing but his Love can satisfy me: He knows my Diligence and my holy Labour to please him: He knows the Wrestlings and the Conflicts that I go thro' hourly, to maintain my close Walking with my God: He knows that I live, tho' 'tis but a feeble Life; and the Charges of the World against me are false and malicious. 'Tis with a Relish of holy Pleasure that the Christian sometimes, in secret, appeals to our Lord *Jesus Christ*, as *Peter* did, and says, *Lord, thou who knowest all Things, knowest that I love thee*, John xxi. 17.

Ild Consolation. 'Tis a Matter of unspeakable Comfort to a Christian, that the most terrible Things to a Sinner, are become the greatest Blessings to a Saint: And these are Death and Judgment. What can be more dreadful to those who know not God, than those two Words are? for they put an eternal End to all their present Pleasures, and to all their Hopes. But what greater Happiness can a Saint wish or hope for, than Death and Judgment will put him in the Possession of? The one carries his Soul upward where his Life is, *that is*, to God and *Christ* in Heaven; the other brings his Life down to Earth, where his Body is, for *Christ* shall then come to raise his Dust from the Grave.

I confess, I finished my former Discourse on this Text, with a *Meditation on Death and Judgment*; how the Gloom which hung around the

the Saint in this Life, is all dispelled at that blessed Hour ; and he who was unknown and despised among Men, stands forth with Honour amongst admiring Angels : His *hidden Manner of Life* is for ever at an end. But in this Discourse the secret and glorious *Springs* of his Life, (*viz.*) *God* and *Christ*, will naturally lead us to the same delightful Meditations of Futurity, as the *hidden Manner* of it has done ; and there is so rich a Variety of new and transporting Scenes and Ideas attending that Subject, that I have no need to tire you with unpleasing Repetition, tho' I resume the glorious Theme.

Let my Consolations proceed then, and let the Saints rejoice.

At the Moment of Death, the Soul may say,
 " Farewell, for ever, Sins, and Sorrows, and
 " Perplexities ; farewell Temptations of the
 " alluring and the affrighting Kind : Nei-
 " ther the Vanities, nor the Terrors of this
 " World, shall reach me any more ; for I
 " shall from this Moment for ever dwell where
 " my Joy, my Life is. *All my Springs are in*
 " *God, and I shall be for ever with him.*"

And *when the Morning of the Resurrection dawns* upon the World, and the *Day of Judgment appears*, the Body of a Christian shall be called out of the Dust, and shall bid Farewell for ever, to Death and Darkness, to Disease and Pain, to all the Fruits of Sin, and all the Effects of the Curse. *Christ*, who
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is the *Resurrection and the Life*, stands up as a compleat Conqueror over all the Powers of the Grave; He bids the sacred Dust, *Arise and live*; the Dust obeys, and revives; the whole Saint appears exulting in Life; the Date of his Immortality then begins, and his Life shall run on to everlasting Ages.

Methinks such lively Views of Death, should incline us rather to *desire to depart* from the Body, *that we may dwell with Christ*. Death is but the Flight of the Soul where its divine Life is. Why should we make it a Matter of Fear then, to be *absent from the Body*, if we are immediately *present with the Lord*?

Methinks, under the Influence of such Meditations of the Resurrection, Faith should breathe, and long for the last Appearance of Christ, and rejoice in the Language of holy Job; *I know that my Redeemer lives, and he shall stand at the latter Day on the Earth*. A Christian should send his Hopes and his Wishes forward to meet the Chariot-Wheels of our Lord Jesus the Judge; for the Day of his Appearance, is but the Display of our Life, and the Perfection of our Blessedness. *When Christ, who is our Life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in Glory*; Colos. iii. 4.

My Thoughts kindle at the Sound of that blessed Promise, and I long to let Contemplation loose on a Theme so divinely glorious. If
ever

ever the Pomp of Language be indulged, and Magnificence of Words, it must be to display this bright *Solemnity*, this illustrious *Appearance*, which out-shines all the Pomp of Words, and the utmost Magnificence of Language.

Come, my Friends, let us meditate the sacred Conformity of the Saints to *Christ*, first, in their *hidden*, and then in their *glorious Life*; as he was on Earth, so are they; both hated of the World, both unknown in it. The Disciples must be trained up for publick Honours, as their Master was, in this hideous and howling Wilderness, in Caves of Darkness, or rather in a Den of Savages. They must follow the *Captain of their Salvation* thro' a thousand Dangers and Sufferings; and they shall receive their Crown too, and a Glory like that which arrays their divine Leader.

O may I never think it hard to trace the Footsteps of my Lord, tho' it be in a miry, or a thorny Way! May I never repine at Poverty and Meanness of Circumstance in my present Pilgrimage! nor think it strange if the World scorn and abuse me, or if *Satan*, the foul Spirit, should assault and buffet me sorely! Dare I hope to *appear in Glory*, when *Christ*, who is *my Life*, appears; and can I not bear to attend him in Sufferings and Shame? Am I better than my blessed Lord? What poor Attendants had the Son of God, at his first Entrance into our World! How mean

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mean was every Thing that belonged to him on Earth! What vile and despicable Rayment, unworthy of the Prince of Glory! What coarse Provision, and sorry Furniture, to entertain incarnate Godhead! And how impious was the Treatment he found among Men, and impudent Temptations from the same foul Spirit! He had Snares, Sorrows, and Temptations, watching all around him: *The Sorrows of Death compassed him about*, and the Powers of Darkness crowded him with their envious Assaults; Earth and Hell were at once engaged against him; they hung him bleeding on a cursed and infamous Tree, lifted on high to be made a more publick Gazing-Stock, and an Object of wider Scorn! Blessed Saviour! How divine was thy Patience to endure all these Indignities, and not call for thy Father's Legions, nor thy own Thunder.

But this was the Hour of thy appointed Combat, the Place of thy voluntary Obscurity, and the Season of thy *hidden Life*; and thy Saints must bear thy Resemblance in both Worlds. How unspeakable were thy past Sorrows! and they present Glories all unspeakable! How infinitely different were these dark and mournful Scenes, from the Joys and Honours thou hast purchased by those very Sufferings! Sacred Honours and Joys without allay, which thou art now possessed of as their great Forerunner, and hast

hast made ready for thy Subjects in thy own Kingdom! What Robes of Light shall array thy Followers in that Day? What bright Planet, or brighter Star, shall be the Place of their Dwelling? or shall all those shining Worlds be Mansions of various Residence, as thou shalt lead thy Saints successively thro' the vast and numerous Provinces of thy boundless Dominion? Sorrow, Sin, and Temptation, shall be named no more, unless to triumph over them in immortal Songs. The fairest Spirits of Light, in their own heavenly Forms, shall be the Companions and Attendants of the Children of God. *Jesus*, the Lord of Glory, is their King and Head, the Leader of their Triumph, and the Pattern of their Exaltation. *Jesus* shall appear in his Meridian Lustre, as *the Sun of Righteousness* in the Noon of Heaven; yet the Beams of his Influence shall be gentle as the *Morning-Star*. There needs no other Sun in that upper World; *The Lamb is the Light thereof*. *Jesus*, the Ornament of Paradise, and the Delight of God, shall be the eternal and beatifick Object of their Senses, and their Souls; *they must be where he is, to behold his Glory*.

The blessed God *shall dwell among them*, and lay out upon them the Riches of his own All-sufficiency; Riches of *Wisdom, Grace, and Power*, all surprizing, and all infinite. *Divine Power* shall then reveal all the Glory
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that has been laid up for them, of old, in the Purposes of God, or in the Promises of the Book of Life. But it was fit it should be hidden there, while the Time of their Probation lasted; it was fit they should live by Faith, and under some Degrees of Darkeness, while the Ages of Sin and Temptation were rolling away: It was divinely proper that *eternal Life* should not break forth, nor the Splendors of the third *Heaven* be made too conspicuous, till the six thousand Years of Mortality and Death had finished their Revolutions round the lower Skies, and had answered the Scheme of divine Counsel and Judgment, on a World where Sin had enter'd.

But *Life* and *Heaven* must not be hid for ever. The almighty Word, in that Day, shall bid the ancient *Decree* bring forth, and the Promise unfold it self in publick Light. What new Worlds of unseen Felicity! What Scenes of Delight, and celestial Blessings, never yet revealed to the Race of *Adam*! When the Rivers of Pleasure, that had run under Ground from the Earth's Foundation, shall break up in immortal Fountains.

Mercy and Truth shall lavish out upon Men with an unsparing Hand all those Treasures of *Life* which were *hid in God*, and in the Gospel for them. The *All-wise* shall please himself in making so noble Creatures, out of so mean Materials, Dust and Ashes. Glorified Saints are Master-pieces of divine Skill; and the blef-

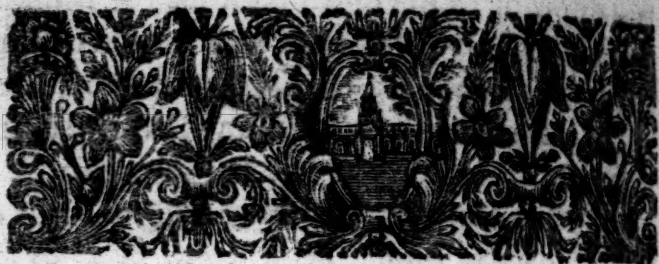
bleſſed Original, or firſt Exemplar of them, the Man *Jeſus*, is the Perfection of the Contrivance of God; here he has *abounded in all Wiſdom and Prudence*. Then the Inhabitants of upper Worlds ſhall ſee an illuſtrious and holy Creation, riſing out of the Ruins of this wretched Globe, involv'd all in Guilt, and weltring in penal Fire. When this Scene opens, what ſounding Acclamations ſhall echo from World to World, and new univerſal Honours be paid to divine Wiſdom! *The Morning-Stars ſhall ſing together again*, and thoſe holy Armies *ſhout for Joy*.

The Grace of God deſcending to Earth, in Days paſt, had in ſome Meaſure prepared his Children for Glory: But in that Day he ſhall enlarge their Capacities, both of Senſe and of Mind, to an unconceivable Extent, and ſhall fill the Powers of their glorify'd Nature, with the *Fruits* of his Love, *new and old*.

And what if the Limits of our Capacity ſhall be for ever ſtretching themſelves on all ſides, and for ever drinking in larger Meaſures of Glory? What an aſtoniſhing State of ever-growing Pleaſure! What an eternal Advance of our Heaven! The Godhead is an infinite Ocean of Life and Bleſſedneſs, and finite Veſſels may be for ever ſwelling, and for ever filling in that Sea of All-ſufficiency. There muſt be no tireſom Satiety in that everlaſting Entertainment. God ſhall create the Joys of his Saints ever freſh: He ſhall

shall throw open his endless Stores of Blessing, unknown even to the first Rank of Angels; and feast the Sons and Daughters of Men, with Pleasures a-kin to those which were prepared for the Son of God. For, verily, he took not upon him the Nature of Angels, but the Likeness of sinful Flesh: And when he shall appear the second Time without Sin to our Salvation, we shall then be made like him, for we shall see him as he is. Amen.





S E R M O N XI.

Nearness to God the Felicity of
Creatures.

P S A L M lxxv. 4.

*Blessed is the Man whom thou chusest,
and causest to approach unto thee,
that he may dwell in thy Courts.*

The First Part.

IT was an elegant Address that
the Queen of *Sheba* made to *Solomon*, when she had survey'd the
Magnificence of his Court, and
had heard his Wisdom ; *Happy*
are thy Men, and happy are these thy Servants,
who stand continually before thee ! And there
was much Truth and Honour in her Speech.
But the Harp of *David* strikes a diviner
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Note; *Blessed is the Man whom thou chusest, O God, that he may approach unto thee, and dwell in thy Courts, in the holy Sanctuary!*

Whether, in these Words, the Psalmist blesses those *Levites* and *Priests*, whose Duty it was to attend the Ark, and to dwell near the Tabernacle, or whether he pronounces *Blessedness* on every Man of *Israel*, whose Habitation nigh the Ark gave him frequent Opportunities to attend at that solemn Worship, is not very necessary to determine. Either of these may be called *dwelling in the Courts of God*. But 'tis most probable that the sacred Writer designs the *second* Sense of the Words, and that he includes himself in the Desire or Possession of this Blessedness, though he was neither a *Priest* nor a *Levite*; for he uses the same Phrase in several Places, and applies it to himself: *Psal. xxvii. 4. One Thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; That I may dwell in the House of the Lord all the Days of my Life. Psalm xxiii. 6. I will dwell in the House of the Lord for ever.* By which he intimates, that he would seek the most frequent Opportunities of approaching God in publick Worship.

'Tis sufficient to my present Purpose, that the holy Psalmist makes the *Blessedness of Man* to depend upon his *near Approaches to God*.

Here we should remember, that God is necessarily near to all his Creatures, by his in-

infinite Knowledge, by his preserving and governing Power: *He is not far from every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our Being*; Acts xvii. 27, 28. But the Privilege which David speaks of in my Text, is a *peculiar Approach of a Creature to God*, which is a Fruit of divine Choice and Favour. The Souls who enjoy this Blessing, are *chosen* to it, and by divine Providence and Mercy are *caused to approach him*. What further Explication of this Phrase is necessary, will be sufficiently given in the following Parts of the Discourse.

Let this then be the *Doctrine* which I shall attempt to confirm and improve, (*viz.*)

Doct. Nearness to God is the Foundation of a Creature's Happiness.

This may be prov'd with Ease, if we consider, What 'tis that makes an intelligent Being happy; and how well such an *Approach to God* furnishes us with all the Means of attaining it.

The *Ingredients of Happiness* are these three: The Contemplation of the most excellent Object; The Love of the chiefest Good; And a delightful Sense of being belov'd by an all-sufficient Power, or an almighty Friend.

1st, *The Contemplation of the most excellent Object*. And he who is nearest to God, has the fairest Advantages of this kind. The Understanding is a noble Faculty of our Na-

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Natures; Truth is its proper Food, and Truth, in all the boundless Varieties and Beauties of it, is the Object of its Pursuit, when 'tis refin'd from Sensualities.

This is the Delight of the *Philosopher*, to search all the hidden Wonders of Nature, and pursue Truth with a most pleasurable and restless Fatigue: For this he climbs the Heavens, traces the planetary and the starry Worlds: For this he pries into the Bowels of the Earth, and sounds the Depths of the Ocean; and when, with immense Toil of Mind, he has found out some unknown Natural Truth, how are all the Powers of his Soul charmed within him, and he exults, as it were, in a little Paradise!

But the *Souls*, who are admitted to draw nearest to God, contemplate infinite Truth in its *Original*. They converse with that Divine Artificer who spread abroad these Curtains of Heaven, who moulded this Globe of Earth, and furnish'd the upper and the lower Worlds with all their admirable Varieties. He is a God of Glory and Beauty in himself, as well as the Author of all the Beauties of Nature. All his Perfections, as well as his Works, yield heavenly Matter for Contemplation: He eminently contains in himself all the amazing Scenes of Nature, and the more transporting Wonders of the World of Grace; those Mysteries wherein he has abounded in

all Wisdom and Prudence: How the ruined Sons of Adam were rescued from Death, by the Son of God dying in their stead; how Satan was baffled in his most subtle Designs, and the deepest Policies of Hell undermin'd, when the Prince of Darknes destroyed his own Kingdom, by persuading Men to put the Son of God to Death.

What a divine Pleasure is it to converse with that Wisdom which laid the Eternal Scheme of all these Wonders, and of ten thousand more unknown Beauties in the Transactions of Providence and Grace, with which the blessed Minds above are feasted to Satisfaction! And besides all these, God has reserv'd in himself a hidden World of new Scenes to open hereafter, and an everlasting Profusion of new Wonders to display before the Eyes of his Favourites. Heaven is described by *seeing God*, by *beholding him Face to Face*, and by *knowing him* in the way and manner in which *we are known*: And he is pleased to indulge some Taste of this Felicity to his Children in this Life, by Mediums and Glasses, by Types and Figures, by his Word and Ordinances, under the enlightning Beams of his Spirit. This is the *Beauty of the Lord*, for the View of which, *David* desired *to dwell in the Sanctuary*, *Psal. xxvii.* that he might *see the Power and Glory of God continually*, as he had sometimes *seen it there*:
that

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that he might behold his Beauty, and talk of his glorious Goodness in his holy Temple. O how great is his Goodness! and how great is his Beauty! Zech. ix, 17.

But Contemplation alone cannot make a Creature happy: This only entertains the Understanding, which is but one Faculty of our Natures; the *Will* and *Affections* must have their proper Entertainment too. Their beatific Exercise may be comprized in the word *Love*, either in the *Out-goings*, or the *Returns* of it: And this leads me to the following Particulars.

Firstly, The next *Ingredient* of a Creature's Happiness, is, *The Love of the chiefest Good*. And those whom God chooses, and causes to approach himself, when they are under Divine Illuminations, see so much Beauty and Excellency in his Nature, his Power, and Wisdom, and so many lovely Glories in his overflowing Grace, that they cannot but love him above all Things; and this Love is a great part of their Heaven. What sweeter Pleasure is there in this lower World, than to give a Loose to the affectionate Powers of the Soul, to converse with the most amiable and most desired Object, to feed upon it without ceasing, and to dwell with it perpetually? But the most refreshing Enjoyments of this kind that Mortality admits of, in the Pursuit or Possession of created Good, are but faint and feeble

Shadows of the Blessedness of holy Souls in the Love of God, who is the most amiable, and the best of Beings: Therefore they *love him with all their Heart and Soul, with all their Mind and Strength*; and if they had more Powers in Nature that could be employed in Love, they should all be laid out in the Search and the Fruition of this *First and Best-beloved*: For there are endless Stores, and Treasures of unknown Loveliness in the Godhead, to excite and entertain for ever the fresh Efforts of the most exalted Love.

But for me to *know*, and to *love* the best of Beings, cannot make me compleatly Happy, unless I am *beloved of him* also, and unless I *feel* that he loves me. Happiness requires mutual Love.

The *Third Ingredient* therefore of our Felicity, and that which perfects the Blessedness of a Creature, is, *The delightful Sense of the Love of an Almighty Friend*. To know, to love, and to be beloved by such a Being, must compleat our Bliss; one who hath all Beauty, and all Goodness in himself; one who can free us from every Pain, secure us against every Peril, and confer upon us every Pleasure. This is the Perfection of our Heaven, when all these are enjoy'd in a perfect Degree, without any Allay. Now such is the State of those who *are chosen, and caused to approach unto God*, so as to know

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know him, and love him; that they have the chiefest Advantages to obtain the Assurance and Taste of his Love. The Man whom the Psalmist pronounces *Blessed* in my Text, hopes for this Pleasure in *the House of God*, that he shall be *satisfied with the Divine Goodness* there.

The *Loving-Kindness* of God is Life, or something *better than Life*, Psal. lxxiii. 3. and to have a Sensation of this Loving-Kindness, is to feel that *I live*. To think, to know, and to be assured that I am beloved by an All-sufficient Power, *who can do more for me than I can ask or think*, in Life, and Death, and in Eternity, and to have pleasing and spiritual Sensations of *this Love shed abroad in the Heart*; this raises the Christian near to the upper Heaven, while he dwells on Earth, and he *rejoices with Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory*.

Some may *object* here, and say, Is it no part of our Blessedness then to love the Saints, to rejoice in their Love, to contemplate the Works of God, and his Wonders in Creation and Providence? *Answer*. Yes, surely; and we have allowed it before: But when we take true Satisfaction in any of these, 'tis as they proceed from God, as they relate to God, and lead our Souls to centre in him; for God, who is the first Cause, must be the last End of all, and no

Creatures, as divided from him, can make us either Holy or Happy.

I proceed now to make some *Improvement* of the few Thoughts I have delivered on this Subject.

I. My *first Reflection* should be upon the *Scale of Blessedness*, or the several *Degrees of Felicity* that *Creatures* are possessed of, according to their *advancing Approaches toward God*: But my *Meditations* dilate themselves here to so large an Extent, as makes it necessary to adjourn this Thought to the next Discourse. I proceed therefore to the

II^d. Reflection. *What unknown Evil is contained in the Nature of every Sin, for it divides the Creature from God and from Happiness?* It may be said to every Soul on Earth, as it was once said to *Israel*; *Your Iniquities have separated between you and your God*, Isa. lix. 2. What a world of endless Mischief was comprized in the first Sin of *Adam*, whereby this lower Creation was (as it were) cut off from God at once? Man was at first happy in the Image and Love of his Maker, a-kin to him by Nature and Creation, as a Son to a Father: *Adam was the Son of God*, Luke iii. ult. and he enjoy'd the Privilege and the Pleasure of *holy Nearness to God*, and humble Converse with him. He read the Name of his Maker in all his Works; he could contemplate

Divine

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Divine Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, there; he loved his Creator with all his Soul, and was happy in his Creator's Love. But when Sin entered, *Adam* fled from his heavenly Father, and his Friend; *He hid himself among the Trees of the Garden*, when the Voice of the Lord called after him, *Adam, where art thou?* And it has been the dismal Description of Sinners ever since, that they are *afar off from God*.

O what Tongue can express, or what Heart can conceive, the immense Load, and everlasting Train of Mischiefs and Miseries, that lie heavy on poor Mankind, and have pursued Human Nature, in all the infinite Members and Branches of it, through all Ages and Nations, for almost six Thousand Years? All these were introduced by Man's first Disobedience. We are a sinful Race of Creatures; born in the Likeness of the original Sinner: We come into the World *estranged from God, and go astray from the Womb*; for we were *shapen in Iniquity, and conceived in Sin*, Psal. lviii. 3. & li. 5. 'Tis the Temper and Spirit of Mankind, by Nature, to desire an Absence from God, and to wish their own Misery. Job xxi. 14. *What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? Depart from us, for we desire not the Knowledge of thy Ways.* By Nature we love him not, nor do we seek after his Love. This is your State, and this mine by Nature: These are our hateful and

deplorable Circumstances, and yet we go on to aggravate our own Guilt, to run further from God hourly, and to make haste to everlasting Wretchedness, if Divine Grace prevent us not.

— III^d Reflection. Is Nearness to God the Foundation of the Creature's Felicity, then *how vain are all Pretences to Happiness, while Man is a Stranger to God?* Let him be surrounded with all imaginable Delights of Sense, or let him be furnished with all Advantages of Reason, or Natural Knowledge, to entertain the Mind; yet if he be afar off from God, he must be afar off from Blessedness. *Without God, and without Hope*, is the Character of the sinful World. Do the prophane and sensual Wretches boast of their Pleasures, while God is not in all their Thoughts? Empty Shows of Pleasure, and vain Shadows! And even these Shadows, these vain Flatteries, are ever flying from their Embraces; they delude their Pursuit in this World, and shall vanish all at once at the Moment of Death, and leave them in everlasting Sorrow!

Let the *Sensualist* sport himself in his own Deceivings, and bless himself in the midst of his Madness: Let the *Rich Worldling* say, "Soul take thine ease, for thy Barns and thy Chests are full." Let the *meer Philosopher* glory that he has found Happiness out; let him busy himself in refined Subtilties,

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ties, and swell in the Pride of his Reason: Let all these *Pretenders* to Felicity, complement each other if they please, or call themselves *the only happy Men*; yet the meanest, and the weakest of all the Saints, would not make an Exchange with them; for the Saint is brought nigh to God: And though his Poverty here be never so great, and his Understanding never so contemptible, yet he knows this great Truth well, that *To exchange God for the Creature, would be infinite Loss, and Misery unspeakable.* They who never drew near to God, who never saw God in his Works or his Word, so as to love him above all Things, and partake of his Love, must be miserable in spite of all their Pretences: *They that are far from God shall perish,* Psal. lxxiii. 27.

IVth Reflection. *God has not utterly abandon'd this World to Sin and Misery, while he keeps his Word and his Ordinances in it: For these are his appointed Means of approaching to him, and Steps whereby we may climb to the Blessedness of Saints and Angels.* God sent his Word after *Adam* the Sinner, when he fled from him in Paradise, that he might recal Man back to himself; and he has been ever since sending Messages of Peace, and Invitations of Love, to a ruined and rebellious World. Happy Sinners, who hear the Voice of an inviting God, who turn their back upon the perishing Vanities of

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Life and Time, who forsake the Creatures, and return to their Creator again! Thousands of the Sons and Daughters of Adam have accepted the Messages of this Grace, and have been by these Methods train'd up for Glory: By conversing with God in his Ordinances, and dwelling in his Courts on Earth, they have been happily prepared for an everlasting Habitation in his Court of Heaven. We this Day are favour'd with the same Divine Call in the Gospel; let every Soul of us rejoice and follow.

Vth Reflection. *The true Value of Things on Earth may be judged of, and determined by their Tendency to bring us near to God and Heaven.* The common Measure of our Esteem of Things, is the Influence they have to promote what we think our *Happiness*. Now if our Judgment be set right in this Point, and we are convinced that an Approach to God is the way to be Happy, then whatsoever leads us nearest to God, will rise in value in our Esteem.

Then our Hearts will set a high Esteem on those Friends or Relatives who draw us to the Knowledge and Love of God: Then we shall prize the *Ministrations of the Gospel* in England above the Riches of both the *Indies*: Then we shall not think the *Ministry of the Word* a mean and contemptible Employment, nor delight to hear Scandals thrown on the Persons or the Characters of those who are engaged in it; for

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for these are the Servants of the living God, who show us the Way to be Happy. Then we shall commend those Sermons, and those Writings most, not that have most Wit and Fancy in them, but those which we feel and find to draw our Hearts farthest off from Sin and the Creature, and bring them nearest to God; and then if there were but one Bible in the World, we should all agree to say, That there is not Treasure enough in all the material Creation to purchase it out of our Hands.

With Reflection. *All the Means of Separation from God, should be numbred among the Instruments of real Misery.*

Does Satan, the fallen Angel, sollicite our Youth with his Flatteries; that 'tis time enough to mind Religion yet; let us have a few more gaudy Days first? Does he frighten the aged Sinner with terrible Falshoods, and tempt him to an utter Despair of Grace: Let his wicked Suggestions be renounced with disdain, and let him never prevail to keep one Soul of us at a distance from God; for his first Business was to divide us from God, and to ruin our Happiness: And 'tis his daily Employment to hold us fast in the Chains of Iniquity and Death, and thus to prevent our Return to God.

Does the Flesh allure us to pursue sinful Delights? Does it awaken and charm our Imagination with the flowery and fatal Scenes of Luxury and Mirth? Do the Lusts of the
Flesh,

Flesh, or the Lusts of the Eye, persuade us to seek Happiness among them? And tempt us, at least for the present, to lay aside the Thoughts of God? Let us set a strict Guard upon our selves, and watch all the Avenues of Sense and Appetite, lest we be drawn off from the Practice of Piety, and the Service and the Love of God, where true Happiness is only to be found.

Do you find, O Christians, that the World Begins to creep into your Heart? Do you find any Creature sit too near your Souls, and take up any of that Time and Room which God should have there? Awake betimes, and bestir your selves, lest it divide you from your Happiness. When you feel your Spirits at any time grow cold in Religious Worship, when you can pass a Day with an Indifference about secret Converse with God, and be content to be long absent from him, search with Diligence what Enemy 'tis that has crept in secretly, and interposes betwixt God and you; and when you have found it, never rest till, by the Aids of Divine Grace, you have removed the Idol from your Thoughts, and your Soul be restored to its holy Nearness to God again. I might say in general, concerning all this World, keep your Hearts aloof from it, while your Hands, and perhaps your Heads too, are engaged in the necessary Affairs of it. The nearer your Souls are to the Creatures, the farther they de-

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depart from God and Blessedness. As a natural Consequence from this Thought, we may raise a

VIIth Reflection. *Wandrings, and vain Thoughts in the Time of Religious Worship, are, and will be, the great Burdens of a Child of God;* for they clog him, and keep him down, when he would rise to his heavenly Father; they are Bars in his way to Blessedness, for they hinder his *Approach to his God*. But what wretched Creatures are we, if we indulge vain Thoughts, and worldly Images and Idols in the House of God, without Complaint, and without Mourning! What holy Shame and Repentance should it work in us, to think, that even in the Place where the great and blessed God comes to show his Face, we should be building up Walls and Partitions to hide his Face from us! that we should turn away our Faces from him in the Hour when he comes on Purpose to meet us!

I might add, as a *concluding Reflection*, That *this is a tiresome Bondage to a Saint, in a devout Frame, to dwell so long in this Body of Flesh and Blood. This mortal State prevents our compleat Happiness every Hour that we tarry in it.* While we sojourn in this Tabernacle, we are so much the farther from God; while we are at home in the Body, we are absent from the Lord, 2 Cor. v. 6. This mortal Flesh is a painful Vail to the lively Christian, for it divides him from the Sight and full Enjoyment of his chosen Blessed-

Blessedness. At the best we see God *but darkly thro' a Glass* while we dwell here; the Moment of Release places us in the Region of Spirits, where *we shall see him Face to Face*, 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

Tho' all these *Reflections* may afford us many useful Rules for our Practice, yet I will not finish the Discourse without a few *Inferences*, which are more expressly *Practical*.

Practical DIRECTIONS.

1st, *Give all Glory to God for ever, who brings himself so near to us*: He puts us thus far in the Road to Happiness, when he builds his Houses amongst us, when he approaches to us in his holy Ordinances, when he calls, and causes us to approach to him, and gives us kind and sure Promises of eternal Blessedness above in his immediate Presence. Let each of us join with Solomon in that noble Piece of Worship, 1 Kings viii. 27. *But will God indeed dwell on Earth? Behold the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain thee, how much less any House that is built for thee?* Yet the Lord is near to the Churches of his Saints, when they worship him; *He is near to all that call upon him, to all that call upon him in Truth*, Psal. cxlv. 18. And *his Word is near us*, even in our Hands, and on our Lips; that Word which teaches us the way to approach God, and ensures the Blessedness.

O give

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O give Glory to God, the Great and Holy God, that he should ever be willing to let Sinners approach him; that the Majesty of Heaven, and the supreme Lord of all, who had been highly provoked by his rebellious Creatures, should ever come into Terms of Reconciliation; that he himself should provide a reconciling Sacrifice, to satisfy his own governing Justice, and a reconciling Spirit to reduce the Rebel Man to his Obedience and Love. This divine Condescension, O my Soul, demands thy Wonder, and thy Worship.

2dly, *Adore the Mystery of the Incarnation, and bless God Incarnate*; for this is the Ground of all our habitual Nearness to God, and all our actual Approaches to him and Heaven. It was God the Son stooped down, and approached to our Nature, and took a part of it into Union with himself, that we might approach to the Deity: *No Man cometh to the Father, but by the Son, John xiv. 6.* For ever had we, the wretched Offspring of *Eve*, been banish'd from the Courts and the Presence of God, had not this Man *Jesus*, the Son of *Mary*, been caused first to draw near, and to dwell near; and blessed be his Name for ever.

We rejoice with all the Powers of our Souls, to think how near to God the Man *Jesus* is, for since he approaches the Throne, we shall approach too, *Rev. iii. 21.* We shall be blessed through his Blessedness, *Gal. iii.*

8, 14. He was first chosen to draw near, and we chosen in him, Ephes. i. 4. Nearness to God is still a Matter of divine Choice and Distinction: He approaches to God above, accepted in his own spotless Righteousness, and we in him: He is in a more transcendent Manner one with God, and we must be united to God by him, and so made somewhat like him, John xviii. 24. When our Mediator approaches to the Father in Worship, he, as our High-Priest, bears the Names of the whole Church in Heaven and Earth, on his Breast, and on his Shoulders, Exod. xxviii. 12, 29. In his Beauty of Holiness, we unholy Creatures are presented before God, and caused to approach with glorious Acceptance.

Stand still here, O ye Saints of the Most High, and survey your Privileges and your Honours; and remember, that whensoever you draw near to God in the Courts of his House, 'twas Jesus who drew near first, 'tis Jesus who still dwells near to make you acceptable; 'tis he who maintains the Nearness of your State, and your Peace with God, by ever presenting your Natures in his Person: He appears in the Presence of God for us, Heb. ix. 24. 'Tis Jesus who, by his Spirit, lifts you up near to the Father; and 'tis by his best-beloved and nearest Son, that God the Father draws near to all his Children.

3dly, Be not found amongst the Mockers of Approach to God, and holy Converse with him in Worship.

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Ship. They despise Felicity it self. Such there have been of old, and such there are in our Days; and because they are afar off from God themselves, they deny all Nearness to him, they ridicule our Approaches to God, as the vain Effects of a wild Imagination, and the meer sensible Commotions of a warm Fancy.

But is it not a very rational and intelligible Thing, for a Soul in publick Worship, to draw near to God, as to learn more of him, and to know more of his Perfections and Graces than he knew before? May not such a Worshipper have his Love to God raised and warmed by such advancing Knowledge? And may he not arise, by holy Inferences, to a livelier and a surer Hope that he is beloved of God too, and solace himself in this Assurance? What is there in all this which is not perfectly agreeable to Reason, or that should provoke an impious Jest? But let such have a Care, lest they blaspheme God and his Spirit; let them take heed, lest they be thrust down to Hell, and set at a dreadful Distance from God, without Remedy, who deride the Joy of Heaven.

4thly, *Take heed of those Deceits of being above Ordinances*, lest you lose true Happiness thro' Pride and vain Conceit. Abandon the vain Fancy of living nearer to God in the Neglect of 'em. God is glorious in himself, but he has appointed Ordinances, as Means whereby

whereby we may approach and see him. Some Stars, tho' large in themselves, yet are not visible without Glasses; and others that are visible to the naked Eye, yet appear much fairer and larger by this Help. Even so those Glories of God, which are unknown to Reason, and to the Light of Nature, are discovered in the Ministrations of his Word; such are his *Subsistence in three Persons*, and his *forgiving Grace*; and those Glories of his Nature, which are traced out by Human Reason, stand in a diviner Light, with all their Splendors about them, in the Gospel and the Sanctuary.

5thly, *Never rest satisfied without approaching to God in Spirit and in Truth, when you attend on his Ordinances.* This is the *Goodness of his House* that must satisfy the holy Soul of the Psalmist, as he expresses it in the following Words of my Text: *We shall be satisfied with the Goodness of thine House.*

What a Folly 'tis to be pleased with empty Ordinances without God! 1 Tim. iv. 8. *Bodily Exercise profits little:* To make a serious Matter of meer external Things, and to make nothing of spiritual ones! These formal and silly Creatures come to the Palace of the King, and turn their Backs on his Person, to play with his Shadow upon the Wall; ridiculous and childish Folly! And yet how often is this the trifling Practice of Men of Wisdom? and sometimes Persons of true Piety are

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tempted to indulge it. Let me ask my Con-
science, "Did I never let my Curiosity dwell
upon the just Reasoning, the correct Style,
the pretty Similes, the flowing Oratory, or
flowery Beauties of a Sermon, while I neg-
lected to seek my God there, and to raise
my Soul near him? Or perhaps I was
charmed with the Decency and Voice of
the Preacher; or, it may be, was better
entertain'd with some zealous Party-Flights
which flatter'd my own bitter Zeal, and
seem'd to sanctify my uncharitable Cen-
sures; and when I return'd from the Place
of Worship, I had a pleasant Remembrance
of all these." But it had been better, if
Conscience had reproach'd my Folly, and
made me remember, *That I had forgot my God*
there.

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Tis also a dreadful Abuse of Gospel-Or-
dinances, and a high Mockery of God, to
come to his Courts, and not draw near him;
Jer. xii. 2. *When God is near in our Mouth,*
but far from our Heart. Ordinances are an
appointed Medium for Man to come to God
by them. If we use them not as such, we
either make *Idols* of them, by placing of 'em
in God's Stead, or we make *nothing* of them,
no Means of Converse with God; both ways
we nullify 'em, for *an Idol is nothing*, and
mer *Vanity*, as the Prophets and the Apostles
speak: So Ordinances are vain and unpro-
fitable, and utterly insufficient to make us hap-

py without God. They are meer Images, and Shadows without the Substance.

To seek after God, and endeavour to approach him in all his own Institutions, is the way to be recovered from the Miseries of the Fall. To live in a holy Nearness to God, is a Restoration to the Pleasures of Innocency. 'Tis the full Happiness of reasonable Natures to be always with God: 'Tis our noblest Honour, and our sweetest Consolation, in this State of Darkness and Tryal, to get as near him as Earth and Grace will admit; and 'tis also the best Preparative for Heaven, and the State of Glory, where we shall dwell for ever *near him*, and be for ever *blessed*. Amen.





SERMON XII.

The Scale of Blessedness:

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Blessed Saints, Blessed Saviour, and
Blessed Trinity.

PSALM lxxv. 4.

*Blessed is the Man whom thou chusest,
and causest to approach unto thee,
that he may dwell in thy Courts.*

The Second Part.

Y the Entrance of Sin into the
World, Man was first separated
from God and Happiness: God
in righteous Anger withdrew
from his Creature Man; and
Man, obeying the Dictates of his own impious
Will, runs farther away from his Maker
God:

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God: *He is born like a wild Ass's Colt*, unknowing and thoughtless; and like a Colt he runs wild in the Forest of this World, roving amongst a thousand Vanities in quest of Happiness, but afar off from God still. He seeks substantial and pleasant Food, but he meets with broad barren Sands in the Wilderness, or with Brakes, and Briars, and bitter Weeds. He follows every foolish Fire of Fancy, till he is led into many a Pit and Precipice: He rises again, and changes the Chase: He flies perpetually from Object to Object, but finds everlasting Disappointment, Shadows, and painted Hopes, flatter and tire, and delude him, till he lies down and despairs in Death.

This is the Case of Mankind by Nature; they live ignorant of God, and wilfully blind to their own Felicity. Fatal Blindness, and wretched Mankind! But blessed be God, that he has not renounced and abandoned all our Race for ever, and fixed us in a State of eternal Separation from him! Blessed be God, who has chosen, and already called many of the Wanderers to himself again! He has built Dwellings for himself on Earth; he has appointed Means for our Return, and invites all to approach him. Good David had a full and lively Sense hereof, when he wrote the Words of this Song; *Blessed is the Man whom thou chusest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy Courts:*

Whence

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Whence I derived this *Doctrine* in the foregoing Sermon.

Doct. Nearness to God, is the Foundation of a Creature's Happiness.

This Truth appeared in full Evidence, while we considered the *Three chief Ingredients of true Felicity*, (*viz.*) *The Contemplation of the noblest Object, to satisfy all the Powers of the Understanding; the Love of the Supreme God, to answer the utmost Propensities of the Will; and the sweet and everlasting Satisfaction and Assurance of the Love of an almighty Friend, who will free us from all the Evils which our Nature can fear, and confer upon us all the Good which a wise and innocent Creature can desire.* Thus all the Capacities of Man are employed in their highest and sweetest Exercises and Enjoyments. Now 'tis God alone, the great and ever-blessed God, who can furnish us with all these Materials of Blessedness, who can refine our Natures, and who can thus engage and entertain all the Powers and Appetites of our Natures refin'd.

Having finish'd what I design'd in the Explication and Proof of this *Doctrine*, I proceeded to make various *Reflections* for our Information and Practice. But the *Meditation* which I propos'd, and reserv'd for this Discourse, was the *sacred Scale of Blessedness*, or the several Degrees of Felicity that Creatures are possess'd of, according to their advancing Approaches

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proaches toward God; and we shall find *Blessedness*, in its highest Perfection, to belong only to God himself.

Ist Degree of BLESSEDNESS.

I. *Happy are they who, tho' they are Sinners by Nature, yet are brought so near to God, as to be within the Sound and Call of his Grace.*

In this Sense the whole Nation of the Jews was a *People near unto God*, for he shewed his Word unto Jacob, his Statutes and his Judgments unto Israel; and upon this Account they were happy, in antient Ages, above all Kingdoms of the Earth; *Psal. cxlvii. and cxlviii.*

Happy those Countries where the Apostles of *Christ* planted the Gospel, and brought Grace and Salvation near them, tho' they were before at a dreadful Distance from God! *Happy Britons* in our Age! Tho' we are involv'd, with the rest of Mankind, in the common Ruins of our first Defection from God; yet we are not left in the Darknes of *Heathenism*, on the very Confines of Hell: But God has exalted us near to Heaven and himself, in the Ministrations of his Word, and led us in a way to his everlasting Enjoyment: He has built his Sanctuaries amongst us, and establish'd his Churches in the midst of us. We are invited to behold *the Beauty of the Lord*, to return to our Obedience, and his Love, and thus be made happy for ever.

This

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This is a Matter of *Divine Choice* and peculiar Favour. Blessed *England*, whom *he* hath chosen, and caused to approach thus far towards himself! And why was not the polite Nation of *China* chosen too? And why not the poor Savages of *Africa*, and the barbarous Millions of the *American World*? Why are they left in a dismal Estrangement from God? *Even so, Father, because it pleased thee, whose Counsels are unsearchable, and whose Ways of Judgment and Mercy are past finding out.*

Blessed are the People who hear and know the joyful Sound, Psal. lxxxix. 15. But there are Degrees of this *Blessedness* even in the Lands which enjoy the Gospel.

Blessed are they above others, who dwell near to the Places of publick Worship, who sit under an enlightning, a powerful and persuasive Ministry, who have Opportunity to hear the Word of God often, and who have Skill to read it.

Blessed are they who are born of religious Parents, and trained up in the early Forms of Piety; these are still brought nearer unto God; they are nursed up, as it were, in his Churches, and dwell in his Courts.

And *blessed* are those who are devoted to the Service of the Sanctuary, like the *Priests* and *Levites* of old, who were brought nearer to God among all *Israel*; for their civil employment, as well as their religious Duty,

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led them continually toward God, Heaven,
and Happiness.

But all these glorious Privileges are not
sufficient to ensure eternal Felicity, unless we
come one Step farther in approaching to
God.

III^d Degree of BLESSEDNESS.

II. *Happy are those Souls who have been
taught to improve their outward Advantages of
Nearness to God, so as to obtain Reconciliation
with him by the Blood of Christ.* This is the
great End of all the Privileges before-men-
tioned, which either Jew or Gentile were
Partakers of: this was the Design of all the
Approaches that God made towards them.
Peace and Salvation were preached to those which
were afar off, and to them that were nigh, and
Christ died to reconcile both unto God; and
that thro' him both might have an Access by one
Spirit unto the Father, Eph. ii. 16, 17, 18. Why
are all the alluring Glories of the Lord dis-
play'd before us in his Gospel, but that we
might be drawn to love him? Why are these
wondrous Manifestations of his Grace made
to us, but that we might become the Ob-
jects of his Love, and taste of his special
Goodness.

*Happy Persons, who are weary of their old
Estrangement from God, who have heard,
and have received the Offers of his Mercy;
who have made their solemn Approaches to
God*

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God by *Jesus* the Mediator, and are joined to the Lord in a sweet and everlasting Covenant! *Happy Creatures*, who behold the Beauties of their Maker's Face with double Pleasure, who love him with all their Souls, and begin to taste the Love of his Heart too. This is a Matter of special Privilege. *Blessed are the Men who are thus chosen by Divine Grace*, and whom he has caused to approach to himself by the converting Power of his own Spirit! Let them come, let them come, and give up their Names to his Churches; let them take up their Places, and dwell in his Courts on Earth, and thus make a nearer Approach to his Court of Heaven.

O that *Sinners* would once be convinced that there are divine Pleasures in Religion, and Joys which the Stranger intermeddles not with! O that they would be once brought to believe that *Happiness consists in approaching to God!* That they would but give Credit to the Report of wise and holy Men, who have lived in humble Converse with God many Years! What a sacred and superior Pleasure 'tis, above all the Joys of Sense, to love the great and blessed God, and to know that he loves me! To walk all the Day in the Light of his Countenance! To have him near me as a *Counsellor*, whose Advice I may ask in every Difficulty of Life! To be ever near him as my *Guard*, and to

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fly from every Danger to the Wing of his Protection! To have such an *almighty Friend* with me in Sickneſs and Sorrow, in Anguiſh and mortal Agonies, and ready to receive my departing Spirit into the Arms of his Love!

O that the *formal and nominal Christian*, who attends divine Worſhip, would but once be perſuaded, that if he come one Step nearer to God, his Happineſs will receive almoſt an infinite Advance! Let the Shadows lead him to the Subſtance; let the Image in the Glaſs allure him to converſe with the original Beauty, and the Ordinances of Grace bring him near to the God of Grace! Let him no longer content himſelf with Pictures of Happineſs, but give himſelf up entirely to the Lord, and be made Poſſeſſor of ſolid and ſubſtantial Felicity. Blessed is the Man who has renounced Sin and the World, and his Heart is overpowered by divine Goodneſs, and brought near to God in his holy Covenant.

Yet there are *Degrees of Blessedness among the Saints on Earth.* Blessed is every Soul whoſe State and Nature are changed, who is not a Stranger, but a Son: but *more bleſſed* are thoſe Sons who are moſt like their heavenly Father, and keep cloſeſt to him in all their Ways! Blessed are they above others in the holy Family, who ſeldom wander from their God, whoſe Hearts are al-
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ways in a heavenly Frame, and whose Graces and Vertues brighten and improve daily, and make a continual and joyful Advance toward the State of Glory.

III^d Degree of BLESSEDNESS.

III. Now let us raise our Thoughts, and wonder at the Blessedness of the Saints and Angels in the upper World: and blessed are those Spirits (whether they belong to Bodies or not) whom the Lord has chosen and caused to approach so near him, as to dwell and abide in his higher Courts! They are fully satisfied with the Goodness of his House, even of his heavenly Temple. The Saints are established as Pillars in this Temple of God, and shall go no more out. They approach him in their sublime Methods of Worship, without the Medium of Types and Ordinances: They see God Face to Face, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Tho' Ordinances in the Church on Earth are Means of drawing near, yet in that very Thing they are also Tokens of some Degree of Estrangement. The Saints above are constantly before the Throne, or Night and Day serving the Lord, as it is expressed metaphorically, Rev. vii. 15. tho' in Truth there is no Night there; for they who dwell with God, dwell in Light everlasting: They approach to their Maker in most pleasurable Acts of Worship, without any interposing Cloud to hide his Face from

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them, without Clogs and Fetters to hold them at a Distance, without Wanderings, without Sins, and without Temptations.

O blessed State! O glorious Felicity! They behold the Beauty of the Lord, transported in divine Contemplation, infinitely various and immortal. They feed upon his Goodness with all the Raptures of refined Love, and are held in long Extasy under the permanent Sensations of the Love of God.

Yet in this State of perfect Glory, there are doubtless some different Degrees of *Nearness to God*, and consequently there are different Ranks and Orders of blessed Spirits. This is evident amongst the Angels beyond all Contradiction; for tho' all of them behold the Face of God continually, Matth. xviii. 10. yet Gabriel seems to be a Favourite-Angel, standing in the Presence of God, and employ'd in the noblest Errands to Men, Luke i. 19. And we read of Seraphs and Cherubs, Angels and Arch-Angels, Thrones, Dominions, and Principalities; which plainly exhibits to us a celestial Hierarchy, or superior and subordinate Ranks of Glory and Power.

And why may it not be so amongst the Saints on high, those Sons of Adam who are made like to Angels? They are so many Stars that shine with various Degrees of Splendor, as they are placed nearer to the Sun of Righteousness, and receive and reflect more of his Beams. I might multiply Ar-

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Arguments on this Head, but I shall at present ask only these two or three convincing Questions.

Can we ever imagine that *Moses* the Meek; the Friend of God, who was (as it were) his Confident on Earth, his faithful Prophet to institute a new Religion, and establish a new Church in the World; who, for God's sake, endured forty Years of Banishment, and had forty Years Fatigue in a Wilderness; who saw God on Earth Face to Face, and the Shine was left upon his Countenance: Can we suppose that this Man has taken his Seat no nearer to God in *Paradise*, than *Samson* and *Jephthah*, those rash Champions of Heaven, those rude and bloody Ministers of Providence, if ever they arrived there at all? Or can we think that *St. Paul*, the greatest of the Apostles, who laboured more than they all, and was in *Sufferings* more abundant than the rest; who spent a long Life in daily Services and Deaths for the sake of *Christ*, is not fitted for, and advanced to a Rank of Blessedness superior to that of the crucified Thief, who became a Christian but a few Moments, at the End of a Life of Rapidity and Plunder? Can I persuade my self, that a holy Man, who has known much of God in this World, and spent his Age on Earth in Contemplation of the divine Excellencies, who has acquired a great Degree of Nearness to God in Devotion, and has served

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him,

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him, and suffered for him, even to old Age and Martyrdom, with a sprightly and faithful Zeal: can I believe that this Man, who has been trained up all his Life to converse with God, and is fitted to receive divine Communications above his Fellows, shall dwell no *nearer* to God hereafter, and share no larger a *Degree of Blessedness*, than the little Babe who just entered into this World to die out of it, and who is saved from everlasting Darknes, (so far as we know) meerly by the spreading Vail of the Covenant of Grace, drawn over it by the Hand of the Parent's Faith? Can it be, that the great Judge who *cometh*, and *his Reward is with him*, to *render to every one according to his Works*, will make no Distinction between *Moses* and *Sampson*, between the *Apostle* and the *Thief*, between the *aged Martyr* and the *Infant*, in the World to come?

And yet after all it may be Matter of Enquiry, Whether the meanest Saint among the Sons of *Adam*, has not some Sort of Privilege above any Rank of Angels, by being of a Kindred-nature to our *Emmanuel*, to *Jesus* the Son of God? But this leads me to the

IVth Degree of BLESSEDNESS.

IV. Let us stand still again, and wonder yet more at the *Blessedness of the Man Christ Jesus in his Approach to God*.

I. His

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1. *His very Union to God is habitual Blessedness.* He is constituted near to God by an unspeakable Union. What Joys, what unknown Delights above our Language, and above our Thoughts, possesses the holy Soul of the Man *Jesus*, for he is the nearest Creature to the blessed God; for he is one with God the Son. The Son of *David*, according to the Flesh, is joined in a personal Union to the eternal Son, *who is over all, God blessed for evermore*, Rom. ix. 5.

There was a Time indeed, when the Divine Nature so far withheld its Influences, as to let him feel Sorrows and sharp Agonies, when he came to make himself a Sacrifice for our Sins, and expos'd his holy Nature to Pain and Shame: He consented for a Season to have God absent, but cry'd out terribly under the present Anguish of it, and shall have no more Tryals of this Kind. *Christ being raised from the Dead, dieth no more*, Rom. vi. 9. The Man who was born of the Virgin, shall now have the eternal Son of God for ever manifesting himself in him, and to him, according to this divine Union.

This is that glorious Piece of human Nature, that One Man, whom God has chosen, from all the rest of Mankind, to bring so near to himself. This is that Flesh, and that Soul, which were chosen by God the Father's Decree, and the Will

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of God the Son, from among all possible, and all future Flesh and Souls, to be made for ever one with God ; and they are for ever one. This wondrous Union has, and must have everlasting Pleasure in it, vastly beyond our nearest Unions and Approaches to God, even in our most exalted State in Grace or Glory. This is an Approach to God indeed, and *blessed is the Man whom thou hast thus chosen, O Lord, and thus caused to approach unto thee, that he may dwell, not only in thy Courts, but in thy Bosom, in thy self for ever and ever: Blessed is this Man, and may he be for ever blessed ! **

2. *His Knowledge of God is much more intimate, more extensive, and more perfect, than any other Creature can attain:* for as he is exalted to the highest Station and Dignity that can belong to a Creature, so we may be assured the all-wise God has furnished him with Faculties of the noblest Capacity, answerable to so exalted a Station; and

* I know the Word *Blessed*, when 'tis applied to God or Christ, generally signifies, that they are the Objects of our Blessing and Praise, and 'tis thus translated from the Originals, בָּרַךְ or εὐλογητός. But in our Tongue this Word signifies also *Happy*, and the original Words בְּרָכָה and Μακάριος, are frequently render'd *Blessed*, to signify *Happiness*, as in my Text. Though, if our Translators had always observed the Distinction, the precise Sense of the Original had better appeared.

Christ

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Christ has the highest Advantage to fill all those Capacities with unconceivable Treasures of Knowledge, by dwelling so near to God, and being so intimately united to divine Wisdom. The sublime Furniture of his Understanding is vastly superior to all that we know, or can know; for our Union to God is but a distant Copy, his is the bright, but inimitable Original. Our Nearness to God bears no Proportion to that of the Man *Jesus*; for his Union to the Godhead is of a superior Kind. He has therefore a vaster Comprehension of all Truth, and a sweeter Relish in the Survey of it, than any created Spirit, angelick or human; and hereby this Part of his Blessedness becomes far superior to theirs.

3. *All the Outgoings of his holy Soul towards God, all his Desires, his Love, and Delight, are more noble in their Kind, and more intense in their Degree, than those of any other Creature.* He who dwells so near to Godhead, sees vastly more Beauty, Excellency, and Loveliness in the Deity, than Men or Angels can do at their Distance; and therefore his Love is raised to unknown Heights and Raptures.

All his Worship of the Father consists of nobler Acts, and nearer Approaches, than is possible for any other Creature to perform, or partake of. *Jesus*, the Man, worshipped here on Earth, and he wor-
ships

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ships above in Glory : He loves the God-head, as infinitely more amiable than himself; he trusts in it as more powerful; acknowledges God is above him in every Glory, in every Beauty infinitely superior to him; and this is divine Worship; for a Creature is still beneath God, and the Acknowledgment of it is the Worship due from him. Now Christ pays this Acknowledgment with greater Humility than the meanest Worm of the Race of *Adam*; for the nearer he is to God, the better he knows the true Distance of a Creature: and because he doth it with greater Humility, therefore with sweeter Delight; for the lower a Creature lies before God, the nearer doth God approach it. *The High and Holy One, who inhabiteth Eternity, and dwells in the high and holy Place, dwells also with the humble Soul,* Isa. lvii. 15. But this leads me to a farther Degree of the Blessedness of the Man *Christ Jesus*; and that is,

4. *He has a fuller, a richer, and a more transporting Sense of the Love of God,* since God makes nearer Approaches to him, and discovers more of his infinite Goodness, and communicates more of his Love. We may venture to say, that God loves the human Nature of *Christ* better than he does any other Creature; and this human Nature has a stronger, and more intimate Consciousness of the divine Love, and a sweeter Sensation of

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of it, than Saints or Angels can have, because of the personal Union between the Son of Man, and the Son of God; which Union (tho' we know not precisely what it is, yet) we know to be sufficient to give him the Name *Emmanuel*, God with us; which distinguishes it most gloriously from all our Unions to God, and raises his Dignity, his Character, and his Advantages, even as Man, to so sublime a Degree above that of all other Creatures.

By his Exaltation, and his dwelling so near to God, his Powers are unconceivably enlarged, and made capable of taking in higher Degrees of Felicity. Sights of God stretch the Faculties of the Soul, and enlarge it to receive more of God; this eternal Sight has our Redeemer. We see the Glory of God chiefly in the Face of *Christ Jesus* his Son, but he sees the Glory of God in his own Face and Brightness, being united to the Eternal Son, who is the *Brightness of his Father's Glory*, Heb. i. 2, 3.

5. As *Christ* is the Medium of our Nearness to God, as he is the Head of all those who approach to God, and the Mediator through whom all approach, so his Blessedness is above ours; for in some Sense, and by Way of Eminence, *he enjoys and feels all that we enjoy and feel, and vastly more too; for he is the Medium through which we approach and we enjoy, as well as a Person who himself,*
and

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and for himself, approaches and enjoys: As when a Stream of Wine or living Water is convey'd from the Spring by a Pipe or Channel, the Pipe has a Tincture of the rich Liquor as it flows; so, (if it be lawful to illustrate Things heavenly and divine, by Things on Earth, and to bring them down to our Idea's by material Similitudes) our Lord *Jesus*, who is authorized to confer Life and Joy on the Saints, and through whom all Grace, Glory, and Blessedness, are conveyed to them, feels, and tastes, and relishes, *eminently*, and in a *superior Manner*, all the Joy and the Blessedness that he conveys to our Souls; and all better than we can do, for he's nearer the Fountain; he takes a divine and unknown Satisfaction in every Blessing which he communicates to us. Besides all this, there are *some richer Streams that terminate and end in himself*; the peculiar Privileges and Pleasures of the God-Man, while others flow thro' him, as the Head, down to all his Members, and give him the first Relish of their Sweetness.

When *Christ*, at the Head of all the Elect Saints, shall at the great Day draw near to the Father, and say, "*Here am I, and the Children thou hast given me; those blessed Ones whom thou hast chosen, that they may approach unto thee by me; I have often approached to thee for them, and behold I now approach with them to the*"

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"Courts of thy upper House:" What manner of Joy and Glory shall this be! How unspeakably blessed is our Lord *Jesus!* and we rejoice with Wonder.

Vth, Or Supreme Degree of BLESSEDNESS.

V. Our Admiration may be raised yet higher, if we make one Excursion beyond all created Nature, and lift our Thoughts upward to the *Blessedness of the Three glorious Persons in the Trinity.* All their infinite and unknown Pleasures are derived from their ineffable Union and Communion in one Godhead, their unconceivable Nearness to each other in the very Centre and Spring of all Felicity. They are inseparably and intimately one with God; they are eternally one God, and therefore eternally blessed; 1 *John* v. 7. *For there are three that bear Record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one;* which Text I believe to be authentick and divine, and that upon just Reasons, notwithstanding all the Cavils and Criticisms that have endeavoured to blot it out of the Bible.

Nor is their *Blessedness*, or their *Nearness*, a dull unactive State: *Knowledge and mutual Love* make up their Heaven, so far as Mortals dare conceive of it, and so far as we have leave to speak of God after the manner of Men.

First,

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First, *Knowledge.* An eternal blisful Contemplation of all the infinite *Beauties, Powers, and Properties of Godhead*, and of all the Operations of these Powers in an unconceivable Variety among Creatures, is the glorious Employment of God. His own Knowledge of infinite Truths, whether wrapt up in his own Nature, or unfolded and display'd in his Works, is a Pleasure becoming the Deity; and each sacred Person possesses this unknown Pleasure.

And besides the general *Glories of the Divine Nature*, we may suppose, that a full and comprehensive Knowledge of the *Sameness, the Difference, the special Properties, and the mutual Relations of the three Divine Persons* (which are utterly incomprehensible to Mortals, and perhaps far above the Reach of all created Minds) is the incommunicable Entertainment of the Holy Trinity, and makes a Part of their Blessedness. In reference to this Mystery, God may be said to dwell in *thick Darkness*, 1 Kings viii. 12. or (which is all one) in *Light inaccessible*, 1 Tim. vi. 16. We are lost in this glorious, this divine Abyss, and overcome with dazzling Confusion: But the ever-blessed Three behold these Unities and Distinctions in the clearest Light. *As the Father knoweth me, so know I the Father, saith Jesus the Eternal Son, John x. 15. And as the Spirit of a Man, knoweth the Things of Man, so the Things of God are known to his own Spirit,*

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Spirit, for he *searcheth the Depths of God*, 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11. as 'tis express'd in the Original, *καὶ βάθυν ὅς οἶσ'*.

But God's Contemplation, or *Knowledge of himself*, is not his only Pleasure, for *God is Love*, 1 John iii. 8. He has an infinite Propensity toward himself, and an unconceivable Complacency in his own Powers and Perfections, as well as in all the Outgoings of them toward created Natures. His Love being most wise and perfect, must exert it self toward the most perfect Object, and the chiefest Good; and that in a Degree answerable to its Goodness too: therefore he can love nothing in the same degree with himself, because he can find no equal Good.

May we not therefore suppose the Blessedness of the sacred Three to consist also in *mutual Love*? May I call it a perpetual delightful Tendency, and active Propensity toward each other? An eternal Approach to each other with infinite Complacency? An eternal Embrace of each other with Arms of inimitable Love, and with Sensations of unmeasurable Joy? Thus saith the Son of God under the Character of *Divine Wisdom*, Prov. viii. 23, 30. *I was set up from Everlasting, from the Beginning, or ever the Earth was. Then was I by him, as one brought up with him, and I was daily his Delight, rejoicing always before him. As the Father loveth*

loveth the Son, so the Son loveth the Father. As the Father delights infinitely in his perfect *Image*, so may we not venture to say, the Son takes infinite Delight in the glorious *Archetype*, and thus imitates the Father? Will not the Expressions of the Apostle Paul, Heb. i. 3. and the Words of Christ himself, John v. 19, 20. encourage and support this manner of speaking? *He is the Brightness of his Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person: The Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all Things that himself doth; and what Things soever he seeth the Father do, these also doth the Son likewise.* And this seems to be the first Foundation of those glorious Offices of raising the Dead, and judging the World, which in the following Verses are committed to the Son, *that all Men may honour the Son as they honour the Father,* ver. 23.

As the *Blessed Three* have an unknown Communion in the Godhead, or Divine Nature, so they must have an *unspeakable Nearness* to one another's Persons, an inconceivable In-being and In-dwelling in each other. John xiv. 10. *I in the Father, and the Father in me.* Each is near to the two other Divine Subsistences, and this mutual Nearness must be attended with Delight and Felicity unknown to all but the *Blessed Three* who enjoy it. O glorious and divine Communion! The Father for ever near to his own Image the Son, and herein blessed! The Son

Father never divided from the Embraces of the Father, and therefore happy! The Spirit everlastingly near them both, and therefore he's the ever-blessed Spirit! And all these united in one Godhead, and therefore infinitely and ever blessed!

The Father is so intimately near the Son and Spirit, that no finite or created Natures or Unions can give a just Resemblance of it. We talk of the Union of the *Sun and his Beams*, of a *Tree and its Branches*: But these are but poor Images, and faint Shadows of this Mystery, tho' they are some of the best that I know. The Union of the *Soul and Body*, is, in my Esteem, still farther from the Point, because their Natures are so widely different. In vain we search thro' all the Creation to find a compleat Similitude of the Creator.

And in vain may we run thro' all the Parts and Powers of Nature and Art, to seek a full Resemblance of the mutual Propensity and Love of the *Blessed Three* toward each other. Mathematicians talk indeed of the perpetual Tendencies, and infinite Approximations of two or more Lines in the same Surface, which yet never can intirely concur in one Line: And if we should say that the Three Persons of the Trinity, by mutual In-dwelling and Love, approach each other infinitely in one Divine Nature, and yet lose not their distinct Personality; it would

would be but an obscure Account of this sublime Mystery. But this we are sure of, that for three Divine Persons to be so unconceivably near one another in the original and eternal Spring of Love, Goodness, and Pleasure, must produce infinite Delight. In order to illustrate the Happiness of the *sacred Three*, may we not suppose something of *Society* necessary to the Perfection of Happiness in all intellectual Nature? To *know*, and *be known*, to *love*, and to *be beloved*, are, perhaps, such essential Ingredients of compleat Felicity, that it cannot subsist without them: And it may be doubted whether such mutual Knowledge and Love, as seems requisite for this End, can be found in a Nature absolutely simple in all respects. May we not then suppose that some Distinctions in the Divine Being are of eternal Necessity, in order to compleat the Blessedness of Godhead? Such a Distinction as may admit (as a great Man expresses it) of *delicious Society*. “We, for our Parts, cannot but hereby have in our Minds a more gustful Idea of a blessed State, than we can conceive in meer eternal Solitude.”

And if this be true, then the three *Differences*, which we call *Personal Distinctions*, in the Nature of God, are as absolutely necessary as his Blessedness, as his Being, or any of his Perfections.

And

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XII. And then we may return to the Words
of my Text, and boldly infer, That if *the*
Man is blessed who is chosen by the free and
sovereign Grace of God, and caused to ap-
proach, or draw near him, what immense
and unknown Blessedness belongs to each
divine Person, to all the sacred Three, who
are by Nature, and unchangeable Neces-
sary, so near, so united, so much one, that
the least Moment's Separation seems to be
absolutely impossible, and (then we may ven-
ture to say) 'tis not to be conceived; and
the Blessedness is conceivable by none but
God?

This is a nobler Union, and a more
intense Pleasure than the Man *Christ Jesus*
knows or feels, or can conceive; for he is
a Creature. These are Glories too divine
and dazzling for the weak Eye of our Un-
derstandings, too bright for the Eye of An-
gels, those Morning-Stars; and they, and
we, must fall down together, alike over-
whelmed with them, and alike confounded.
These are Flights that tire Souls of the
strongest Wing, and finite Minds faint in
the infinite Pursuit: These are Depths where
the tallest Thoughts sink and drown: We are
in this Ocean of Being and Blessedness,
that has no Limit on e'er a side, no Surface,
no Bottom, no Shore. The Nearness of the
divine Persons to each other, and the un-
speakable Relish of their unbounded Pleasures,
are

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are too vast Ideas for our bounded Minds to entertain. 'Tis one infinite Transport that runsthro' Father, Son, and Spirit, without Beginning, and without End, with boundless Variety, yet ever perfect, and ever present without Change, and without Degree; and all this, because they are so near to one another, and so much one with God.

But when we have fatigued our Spirits, and put them to the utmost Stretch, we must lie down and rest, and confess the great *Incomprehensible*. How far this sublime Transport of Joy is varied in each Subsistence; how far their mutual Knowledge of each other's Properties, or their mutual Delight in each other's Love, is distinct in each divine Person, is a Secret too high for the present Determination of our Language and our Thoughts: it commands our Judgment into Silence, and our whole Souls into Wonder and Adoration *.

Thus

* This Discourse was delivered near twenty Years ago; and the Reader will observe some warmer Efforts of Imagination than riper Years would indulge on a Theme so sublime and abstruse. Since I have searched more studiously into this Mystery of late, I have learn'd more of my own Ignorance: so that when I speak of these *Unsearchables*, I abate much of my younger Assurance; nor do my later Thoughts venture so far into the particular *Modes* of explaining this sacred Doctrine.

Yet,

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Thus we have traced the *Streams of Happiness* that flow amongst the Creatures in endless Variety, to their original and eternal *Fountain*, God himself: He is the *all-sufficient* Spring of Blessedness, as well as of Being, to all the intellectual Worlds; and he is everlastingly *Self-sufficient* for his own Being and Blessedness.

But are not we told in Scripture, that God *delights in the Works of his Hands*, that he *takes Pleasure in his Saints*, that he *rejoices in Zion*, and *rests in his Love* to his Church; that *Jesus Christ*, even as Man and Mediator, is the *Beloved of his Soul*, in whom he is *well-pleased*? Yes, surely, this is one way whereby he represents his own Divine Satisfaction in our Language, and after the Manner of Men. But we must not imagine that he ever goes out of himself, and descends to Creatures, as tho' he needed any Thing from them, who are all *before him as nothing, and less than nothing, and Vanity*. 'Tis from his own Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, as they appear in all his Works, that his Delight arises; and

Yet, since I am fully established in the Belief of the *Deity of the Blessed Three*, (tho' I know not the *Manner of Explication*) I dare let this Discourse appear now in the World, as being agreeable in the main to my present Sentiments on this Subject. *August 2. 1720.*

'tis

'tis in these Glories of his Nature, and in the gracious Purposes of his Will, as they are manifested in his Works, that the Saints and Angels, and all the happy Ranks of Being, find their highest Satisfaction. 'Tis in the Contemplation of God, and in the Exercises and Sensations of divine Love, that all supreme Felicity consists, so far as we are capable of being acquainted with it.

The only Reflection with which I shall conclude the Subject, is this, That *Communion with God, which has been impiously ridiculed by the profane Wits of the last and the present Age, is no such visionary and fantastick Notion as they imagine*; but as it is founded in the Words of Scripture, so it may be explained with great Ease and Evidence to the Satisfaction of human Reason.

That it is founded in Scripture, appears sufficiently in several Verses of the 17th Chapter of St. John's Gospel, where the divine Union and Blessedness of the Father and the Son, are made a Pattern of our Union to God, and our Blessedness; John xvii. 21, 22, 23, 26. *That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they may be one in us*: And in this Sense, but in a lower Degree, even here on Earth, our *Communion, or Fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, 1 John i. 3.* Though our *Communion with Christ* includes also some particular

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Varieties in it, which is not my present Business to explain.

That this *Doctrine is exactly agreeable to Reason*, may be thus demonstrated.

We use the Word *Communion*, when two or more Persons partake of the same Thing. So Friends *have Communion* in one Table when they dine together : Christians *have Communion* in one Sermon, in one Prayer, or one Sacrament, when they join together in those Parts of Worship ; and the Saints *have Communion* with God in Blessedness, when they rejoice in the same Object of Contemplation and Love. God surveys himself, he is pleased with his own Glories, delights in himself as the highest and the noblest Object ; he trusts in his own Right-hand of Power, he leans upon his own Understanding, he rests in his own Counsels and Purposes, he feels, and he acknowledges all his own infinite Perfections, and thus he enjoys them all. Thus also is *our Blessedness* frequently set forth in Scripture. 'Tis our Happiness to know God, to contemplate his Glories, so far as they are revealed ; to love him and his Goodness ; to trust in his Wisdom, and lean securely on his Strength ; to feel the Workings of divine Powers and Graces in and upon us, and to make acknowledgment of them all to God. Thus the Image of God is restored to us in Holiness and in Happiness : Thus we are said to be *holy as God is holy* ; and thus also we are *blessed as God is blessed*.

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But tho' we are admitted to this amazing Privilege, and *hold Communion with God*, in the same Object of Contemplation and Love, yet we must still remember, with humble Adoration, that his Holiness, and his Happiness, does infinitely exceed ours. The Pleasures which arise from his Knowledge and his Love of himself, are as far above our Taste, or all our Ideas of Blessedness, as Heaven is higher than the Earth, or as God is above the Creature.

There is another Sense also of this Phrase, *Communion or Fellowship with God*, which has been used by many pious Writers, when they make it to signify the same Thing as *Converse with God*; and this also depends upon our *Nearness*, or Approach to him: As when a Christian, *in secret*, pours out his whole Heart before God, and is made sensible of his gracious Presence, by the sweet Influences of Instruction, Sanctification, or Comfort. When Man speaks, and God answers, there is a sacred Communion between God and Man, *Isa. lviii. 9. Thou shalt call, and the Lord shall answer.* This holy David often enjoy'd, and always sought after it. When the Soul, *in secret*, complains of Perplexity and Darkness, and God is pleased to give some secret Hints of Direction and Advice; when the Soul mourns before God, confessing Guilt, and the Weakness of Grace, and some divine Promise is imprest upon the Mind by the Ho-

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ly Spirit, whence the Christian derives Peace of Conscience, and Strength to fulfil Duty, and to resist mighty Temptations: These certainly are Seasons of *Converse or Communion with God.*

So when, in *publick Worship*, we address God with our Souls in fervent Prayer, and while we hear the Word of God spoken to us by his Ministers, we receive an Answer to those Prayers in the convincing and sanctifying Impressions which the Word makes upon the Heart; this is also an Hour of *secret Communion.* So at the *Supper of the Lord*, when with Hope and Joy we receive the Bread and the Wine, as divine Seals of the Faithfulness of God's Covenant, and when we transact those solemn Affairs also as Seals of our Faith and Love, and our Engagements to be the Lord's; we may properly be said to hold *Fellowship, or Communion with him.*

What swift Advances of Holiness doth the Saint feel in his Heart, and practise in his Life, after such Seasons of Devotion! What Glory doth he give to Religion in a dark and sinful World! What unknown Pleasure doth he find in such Approaches to God! And he moves swiftly onward in his Way to Heaven, by such daily Receipts of Mercy, and Returns of Praise. These are powerful Motives that will make him persist in his holy Practice and Joy, in Scorn of all the Mockery and Ridicule of a profane Age of Infidels.

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So the *Moon* holds bright *Communion* with the Sun, the sovereign Planet; so she receives and reflects his Beams; she shines gloriously in a dark Hemisphere, and moves onward sublime in her heavenly Course, regardless of all the barking Animals that betray their senseless Malice.

This blessed Privilege and Pleasure of *Converse with God*, which is enjoy'd by the Saints on Earth, is doubtless the Pleasure and the Privilege of the *Spirits of the Just made perfect*, and of Angels near the Throne, but in a much higher Degree: When they address the Majesty of Heaven in the Forms of celestial Worship, and receive immediate and sensible Tokens of divine Acceptance; or when they take their Orders and Commissions from the Throne for some particular Errand, or high Employment, and return again to make their humble Report there: These are glorious Seasons of *Converse* with their Maker.

Much more glorious *Communion* of this kind does the Man *Christ Jesus* enjoy with God, in transacting all the vast and illustrious Affairs of his Commission; a Commission large as the Extent of his Father's Kingdom, full of Majesty and Justice, Terror and Grace: a divine Commission to govern, to redeem, and to save, or to punish and destroy Millions of Mankind, as well as to rule all his unknown Dominions in the upper and nether Worlds.

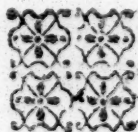
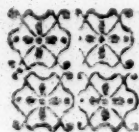
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But in what Manner this *Communion* between *the Father* and *Christ* is maintained, we know not; nor can we guess in what Manner, or in what Degree, such sort of *Converse* or *Communion* as this is practised, or is possible, between the three glorious Persons of the *ever-blessed Trinity*. These are Mysteries wrapt up in sacred Darkneſs, and the Explication of them ſurrounded with Dangers. A particuſar Knowledge of theſe divine Unſearchables, any farther than Scripture has revealed them, is by no Means neceſſary, either to begin, or to maintain our State of Grace. Let us content our ſelves a few Years longer with humble Ignorance, and we ſhall have brighter Discoveries in the future World, if it be neceſſary there to fulfil our Happineſs, and to compleat our State of Glory.



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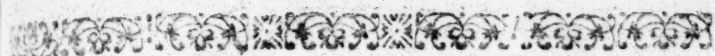
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T W O
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O N

Our *Appearance before* GOD
here and hereafter.

Delivered in

Sir THOMAS ABNEY'S Family
at *Theobalds*, in *Hertfordshire*;

A T T H E
EVENING-WORSHIP,
Nov. 25. and Decemb. 9. 1716.





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To the Right Worshipful
Sir Thomas Abney, Knt.
 And ALDERMAN of London.

Worthy SIR,

WHILE you were restrained by the
 Laws of Men from Publick Worship
 in that Way which you have chosen,
 I also suffered the same Restraint, by
 the Providence of God confining me
 to long Sickness; during which Time, I enjoy'd, in
 your excellent Family, many happy Conveniences
 towards the Ease of my Affliction, and the Reco-
 very of my Health.

I thought it therefore a necessary Piece of Chri-
 stian Gratitude, that some of the First-Fruits
 of my Labours should be devoted to your Ser-

vice; and with this View I attempted such Meditations as might be well suited to my own Circumstances of Confinement, as well as to yours; that I might speak more sensibly from the Heart to your spiritual Advantage, and to the Profit of all your Household.

Since that Time it has pleased the Providence of God to take off your Restraint intirely, and to give you the Pleasures of his Sanctuary; yet the Review of these Discourses, thro' the Operation of the Blessed Spirit, may renew some useful Meditations, when offered from the Press as a Testimony of publick Thankfulness, and in this new Form proposed to your Perusal, by,

S I R,

Your most Affectionate

And Obedient Servant,

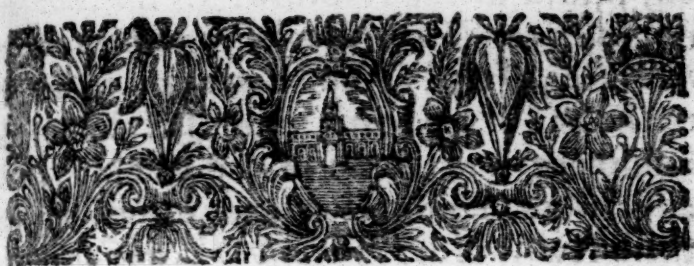
Under many Obligations,

Theobalds, Feb.

1st. 1720.

I. WATTS.

SER



SERMON XIII.

Appearance before God here and hereafter.

PSALM xlii. 2.

When shall I come and appear before God?

The First Part.

THE Holy Psalmist was now absent from his usual Place of Publick Worship, and restrained from coming near to the Ark of God, which was the Token of the divine Presence in the Days of the Jewish Church; and when he had been meditating on his past and present Circumstances in this respect, both what he enjoy'd heretofore, and what he was depriv'd of now, he breaks out

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out into a divine Rapture: *As the Hart panteth after the Water-Brooks, so panteth my Soul after thee, O God.* And he goes on to describe the Frame of his Spirit in this holy Song: The Substance and Sense of the whole *Psalm* is, as is were, epitomized and drawn up into these few Words, *When shall I come and appear before God?*

I shall not spend time to shew in how many Senses *Man* may be said to appear before God; but shall content my self to say, that in this Place it signifies *Attendance on Publick Worship, in the Place where it was usually celebrated and performed.*

In the Words of the *Psalmist* we may find the Temper of his Heart express'd under these Two general Heads.

- I. *A Belief of the special Presence of God in his Ordinances of Publick Worship.*
- II. *An earnest Longing after them on that Account.*

I shall enlarge a little on each of these, and make Remarks, as I go along, under each Head.

First, The Words express *David's firm Belief of the special Presence of God in his Ordinances*, in so much that he calls an *Attendance on them*, an *Appearance before God.* We are always in the View of God, and every Creature is naked and open in his

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Sight, and for ever appears before him as the all-seeing and all-knowing Creator and Governor of all Things ; but it is a peculiar, a gracious, and favourable Presence of God that belongs to his Sanctuary, his appointed Worship : God is there taking special Notice of our Carriage toward him, and manifesting his Designs of special Mercy toward us.

David well knew this, that the great End of appointing publick Worship, was, that there might be a Communication between God and Man, who were so dreadfully separated by Sin : He knew the gracious Promise, that where God recorded his Name, there would he come to meet his People, and bless them, *Exod. xx. 24.* He knew what sensible Tokens of divine Presence were found in the Sanctuary ; there was the Ark of God, and the Mercy-Seat that covered it, upon which God dwelt in a bright shining Cloud, between the Golden Cherubims, to signify his dwelling in Light among the glorious Angels in Heaven ; beside the many sweet Experiences which David had of sensible Discoveries of God in Counsel and Grace, Strength and Consolation, in his publick Worship.

And have not *Christians*, under the Gospel, as great a Reason to expect the special Presence of God among them in his Ordinances ?

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nances? Are they not appointed on purpose to bring God near to us, and to bring us near to God?

Have we not an exprefs Promise of God himself dwelling in Flesh, that *where two or three are gathered together in his Name, he will be in the midst of them*, Matt. xviii. 20. and is not *Christ* worthy of Credit?

Have we not his Word there published and preached? Doth not God appear there very eminently, in the Glory of his Truth, in the Beauty of his Holiness, in the Purity of his Commands, in the Terror of his Threatnings, in the Sweetness of his Promises, in the Wonders of his Wisdom and Power, and more amazing Works of his Grace and Love? Doth not the Lord discover himself there in the Majesty of his Government, in the Miracles of his Providence, and the divine Glory of his Fore-knowledge in Prophecies exactly fulfilled? Surely that Man must be blind indeed, who sees not God in the holy Scriptures.

Will you say, "All this may be seen and read at home in private, as well as in a publick Assembly?" But you must remember, that even the written Word of God was communicated to the most part of Mankind only in publick Worship, for some Thousands of Years; for before the *Art of Printing* was invented, one Bible was

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scarce to be found in several hundred Houses, and very few of the common People were capable of reading; nor could they know the written Word, but by their Attendance on the publick Ministrations of it. And in our Day, how many are there who either do, or will know very little of Religion, but what they hear at Church?

Besides, the *written Word of God* is given to be expounded by his *Ministers*, that the Gospel being preached at large, and the Truths of it being particularly apply'd, his Presence and Glory may appear therein. Many Parts of Scripture are so obscure, that God stands, as it were, behind a Vail, or a Curtain, till, in the Ministry of the Word, the Sense is explained, the Vail removed, and God stands forth to sight in the open Glories of his Majesty, or his Mercy. 'Twas for this Purpose that *Christ*, at his Departure from Earth, engaged the Promise of his Presence with his Ministers, in the Preaching of his Gospel: *Lo! I am with you always to the End of the World*; Mat. xxviii. ult. And is not this sufficient Ground for Men to expect and hope to see God there?

Besides all this, have not *Christians* enjoy'd blessed *Experiences* of the Presence of God in his Sanctuary, in the Assemblies of his Saints? One can say, "I was all Darkness and Ignorance, and there I found divine Light, discovering to me my Sin and Misery, and
" his

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"his Salvation." Another can say, "I was dead in Sin, and found my Soul raised to a divine Life there; I was mourning and despairing, and there I found a Word of Support and holy Joy, such as no meer Words of Men could convey into me; and I am forced to *confess God was in this Place of a truth*, 1 Cor. xiv. 25."

REMARKS on the 1st Head.

1. *How much should we guard against Hypocrisy in divine Worship, because it is an Appearance before God?* We do then, in a solemn Manner, set our selves before God, and, as it were, humbly call God to look upon us, and take notice of our Hearts. Let us remember this, every one of us, when we go to publick Worship, we do in Effect say to God, "O Lord, we are always in thy Sight, but in a special Manner we now come to shew thee our Hearts, to acquaint thee humbly with our Wants, our Sorrows, and our Sins, our Desires and Hopes;" and *God will not hold him guiltless that takes his Name in vain*: He is a jealous God, *he will not be mocked*; Gal. vi. 7. *He is a Spirit, and he will be worshipped in Spirit and in Truth*, John iv. 4. He is sharp-sighted, he sees thro' our Souls, and knows the Ends and Designs of our coming, whether to see Creatures, and be seen of them, or to see himself, our Creator: whether to observe the Modes, Dress, and Behaviour of our

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our Fellow-Creatures on Earth, or to learn the Will of God, and the Mode of Heaven. Suppose *Jesus Christ*, in his Human Nature, were there, whose *Eyes are as a Flame of Fire*, and thro' your Countenances can discern the most secret Thought of your Souls, would you not stand in awe of his Majesty? Would not this glorious Appearance fix the most vain and fluttering Imagination in a pious Solemnity? How solicitously would you watch over your Minds, lest they wander from Worship! How carefully would you keep your Hearts! Or suppose you saw the Holy Angels there which attend the Churches in Worship, would you not be ashamed to trifle even in their Presence? And has not the spiritual Presence of the great God as much real, tho' invisible Awfulness and Majesty in it!

How do Persons, both of the polite and the vulgar World, all agree to dress fine and gay, and make the best Figure of all the Week, to appear before Men on the Day of the Lord? But let us remember that we come not only before Men, but before the Living God, in whose Sight, Ornaments of the Body are of no Account; and, O, what Pains ought we to take, to put on our best Ornaments of the Mind! to see that our Graces all shine, when we are to stand before God! and not to suffer one vain Thought, one corrupt Affection, to work in us;

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us; nor a Spot, or Blemish (if possible) to be found upon us!

Alas! what Millions of *Hypocrites* have we in the World? How many may we fear in every Congregation? How many come to attend at Prayers, but never seek to join their own Wishes and Desires with the Words of him who speaks? How many Voices follow the Tune in a Psalm, but their Souls feel no Joy, no inward Elevations of Praise? How many hear the Word as the Word of Man, and their Hearts have no Sense of God speaking to them? They sit before God as his People, but their Heart goes after their Covetousness; Ezek. xxxiii. 31. after their Idols of Business, or carnal Pleasure, after every vain Object of their Eyes, or vainer Images of the Fancy.

Let us take heed therefore, how we shut our Eyes, or harden our Hearts against a present and a speaking God; for the *Word of the Lord is quick and powerful*: God speaking by his eternal Word, or by his Ministers in his Sanctuary, pierces the secret Recesses of the Soul and Spirit: God sits there, discerning the Intents and Thoughts of the Heart; all Things are naked and open before his Eyes with whom we have to do, Heb. iv.

2d Remark. In Attendance on Publick Worship, we should fix all our Hope and Expectation of Profit upon the Presence of God in it; for

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for the Design of Ordinances is to bring us to appear before God. Now, if in Things of this Life God should be our chief Hope, much more in Things of another, *Psal. lxii. 5. My Soul, wait thou only upon God, my Expectation is from him.*

How ready are we, even in spiritual Concernments, to depend on *outward Forms and Ceremonials* ! and to hope, or despair of Success, according to some circumstantial Attendants on Worship ? One is ready to say, " If it were a nice Enquiry into some deep Doctrine, I should get something by hearing the Word. " Another complains, " Alas ! if it had been a Sermon of Grace and Privileges, I had not been so careless in my Attention, nor wasted my Time. " And a third satisfies his Conscience with this, " If I had heard Moral Duties enforced powerfully on our Practice, then I could profit by the Preaching ; or, if he who ministers had but more Skill in composing, more Fervency of Speech, more Warmth in Delivery, more graceful Pronunciation, more Strength of Argument ; surely I should feel more lasting Impressions of Religion under every Sermon. " And thus we go on from Week to Week, and worship without any sensible Benefit, because we seek all from Men.

But alas ! if all these Things were exactly suited to our Wishes, the Matter ever so agree-

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agreeable, the Manner ever so entertaining, the Voice ever so charming, and the Performance ever so affectionate; if God be not there, there is no lasting Benefit: Paul may *plant*, and Apollos *water*, but God gives the *Increase*; 1 Cor. iii. 6. The Ministration of the Word is committed to Man, but not the Ministration of the Spirit. What can a Man do to give Eyes to the Blind? to give Ears to the Deaf? Can a Man make the Lame to walk? or raise the Dead to a divine Life? and turn Sinners into Saints? Who is sufficient for these Things?

A Minister is ready to say, "When shall I preach to such a People! they would learn and profit by my Sermons." A Christian is ready to say, "When shall I hear such a *Minister*, or partake of such an *Ordinance*, or hear a Discourse on such a *Subject*, managed in such a particular *Method*?" And they are ready to go away discouraged, as tho' all Hope were gone, when they find a Disappointment in the Pulpit; as tho' the Graces of God were confined to a particular Instrument, or as tho' the Words of a Man were our only Hope.

When any of us have been at Church, and waited in the Sanctuary, let us examine what did we go thither to see? A Shadow of Religion? An Outside of Christian Forms? A graceful Orator? The Figures and Shapes of Devotion? Surely then we might with as much

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much Wisdom, and more Innocence, have gone to the *Wilderness* to see a Reed shaken with the Wind. Can we say as the Greeks at the Feast, *John* xii. 21. *We would see Jesus?* Or, as *Absalom*, 2 *Sam.* xiv. 32. It is to little Purpose I am come to *Jerusalem*, if I may not see the King's Face. To little Purpose we go to Church, or attend on Ordinances, if we seek not, if we see not God there.

3d Remark. *What everlasting Thanks are due to our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath made Way for our Appearance before God with Comfort and Hope?* You are called by the Name of Christians, you profess to believe in him, but you know little what you have to do with him, or what Use his Name is of in Religion, if you can go daily to appear in the Presence of God without him; you know not the Nature of Christianity, if you do not feel a Want of *Christ*, when you bow yourselves before God.

Consider a little what God is, and what you are, that you may have a due Sense of the Necessity of *Christ*: Say to your selves, "I am going to appear before the great and glorious God, a God of infinite Perfection, and I am a little Vessel of meer Imperfection and Infirmary; what shall I do to stand in his Sight? He is a God of Majesty and Judgment, and I a Traytor, a Rebel by Nature and Action; I
" want

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“ want some Person to introduce me into
 “ his Favour. He is a God of spotless Ho-
 “ linefs, and I am defiled with a thousand
 “ Sins; Who shall make me appear lovely in
 “ his Sight? He is a God of inflexible Ju-
 “ ftice, and I a guilty Wretch, a Criminal, a
 “ Malefactor, already condemned; who shall
 “ plead for me, and obtain a Pardon?” O
 beg of *Chrift* to introduce you with Accep-
 tance; in him alone can we appear well plea-
 sing to God: He is the Beloved of the Fa-
 ther, and if we are ever *accepted*, it must be
 in the *Beloved*, Ephes. i. 6. *Chrift appears now*
in the Prefence of God for us, in the Virtue of
 his Blood and spotless Obedience, Heb. ix.
 12, 24. He who once appeared *with Sin* im-
 puted, *was made Sin for us*, and was treated
 as a Sinner in the World for our fakes, now
 appears before God, *without Sin*, in Heaven,
 as our great High-Priest and Surety, to make
 us acceptable to God there. Nor should our
 warmeft Devotions, nor our highest Praises,
 dare to appear there without him.

Remember that the *High-Priest* himself
 among the *Jews*, was in Danger of Death,
 whensoever he went into the Holy of Holies,
 to appear before the Tokens of the divine
 Prefence, if he had not proper Garments
 upon him, and the Blood of Atonement
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and the Blood so sprinkled, saith the Lord, *lest he die.* How much more may we fear Destruction, if we rashly, or carelessly, come near and speak to God himself, and yet neglect the Garment of Righteousness, and the Blood of Sprinkling, and *Christ* our great Mediator?

Remember, O Christian, that for a Sinner to appear before God without the Mediator, is a Thing of infinite Terror, and not of Comfort. A Traytor would keep at the farthest Distance from the Prince, if he hath no Friend to speak a Word for him there. To come and present your selves before God as Sinners, without a Saviour, would be but to awaken his Wrath, and put him in Mind of your Guilt, and his righteous Vengeance: Remember therefore to take *Christ* with you when you come near to God. See *Ephes. ii. 3, 13, &c.* *We are by Nature Children of Wrath, and as far off from God,* it is he only can bring us near: *No Man cometh to the Father but by me,* John xiv. 6.

And as this is the only appointed Way for Sinners to appear before God, so it has been the sweet Experience of ten thousand Souls, that they have drawn near to God, in this Manner, with Acceptance and Delight. Hear what many a Child of God can tell you in this Case: "When I had the first Sight of my Guilt and Defilements, and beheld God in the Terrors of his Holiness and
Ju-

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“ Justice, as a *consuming Fire*, I was affright-
 “ ed at the Thoughts of appearing before
 “ him ; every Threatning that I heard, I
 “ thought it was pronounced against me,
 “ nor could I delight my self in the Blessings
 “ of his Gospel, for they were not mine.
 “ But when he was pleased to lead and draw
 “ me to *Christ*, I saw such an All-sufficiency
 “ of Atonement and Righteousness in him,
 “ that would answer all the Demands that
 “ divine Justice had upon me ; I joyfully
 “ accepted of this Salvation, I surrendered
 “ my self as the Subject of his saving Grace :
 “ and though now I behold God in the same
 “ glorious and dreadful Attributes as before,
 “ and behold my self still defiled and sinful,
 “ yet I humbly dare appear before him daily
 “ and hourly, for *Jesus* is my Intercessor, he
 “ is my Propitiation, he is the *Lord my Right-*
 “ *eousness*, and my God sits upon a Mercy-
 “ Seat sprinkled with the Blood of this hea-
 “ venly Sacrifice. My Sins are many and
 “ great, and the Matter of my daily Groan-
 “ ing ; I hear the Threatnings and Curses
 “ of his holy Law, but they affright me not
 “ from his Presence ; for in the Name of my
 “ Mediator I come, who hath borne the
 “ Curse for me : With humble Penitence,
 “ and with a lively Faith, I draw near to a
 “ reconciled God, and give eternal Thanks
 “ to the Reconciler. ”

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4th Remark. *What a Blessing it is to have many Houses of God in the Nation where we dwell, and those Houses of God near us? God may say to us, as to Israel, Deut. xxx. 12. Say not, who shall ascend into Heaven to bring the Word to us that we may hear it? Or, who shall go over the Sea? &c. for the Word is very nigh to us.* We need not travel so far as the Jews, three times every Year, to Publick Worship; and yet they went from Strength to Strength, till they appeared before God in Zion, *Psal. lxxxiv. 7.* Consider some Nations where God is not worshipped aright, and hath no Dwelling-place; consider how far some poor Creatures come even in this Island, many Miles from their own Dwelling, to appear before God in his Ordinances: But God seats his Throne, as it were at our Doors; there are many Synagogues of God in our Land, for us to appear before him, and many near us in the City where we dwell, and near us too in this Place of Retirement.

How valuable a Privilege is it to dwell in a religious Family, in a House of God, where there is a *Church in the House*, as *Philem. 2.* where we often appear before God? How gladly would many Persons (who are in better Circumstances in the World than some of us enjoy) exchange those better Circumstances for spiritual Advantages, such as we have? But some of you perhaps may say, "We may be saved without so much Religion, with-
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“out so much ado about the Worship of God
 “in Families or in Churches.” Let me tell
 you, if a Religious Family be not a Pleasure
 to you, Heaven it self cannot afford you Plea-
 sure; for that is but one great Religious Fa-
 mily, of which *Jesus Christ* is the Head: And
 if the Business of that Place be not your De-
 light, you shall never have a Place there.

Shall I ask the *Servants of this House*, when
 you are called in to *Morning and Evening*
Prayer, what is your End? Do ye come with
 Hope and Desire to appear before God? Or
 is it meerly to obey the Orders of the House,
 and comply with the Custom of the Family,
 for the sake of your temporal Interest?
 Ask your selves, *my Friends*, what is it that
 brings you in constantly at the Seasons of
 Reading and Praying? Is it a Design to get
 near to God.

Shall I ask the *Children*, When you come
 in at the Hour of Worship, do you set your
 selves as before God? Do your Thoughts go
 along with the Words of him who prays?
 Do ye attend to the Word read, as the Word
 of God whereby you must be judged? Or do
 you satisfy your selves to wear out the quar-
 ter of an Hour in sitting still, or in kneeling as
 others do, without Thoughts of God?

Shall *each of us* ask our own Hearts, How
 do we pass the time of daily Worship? Are
 we careful to lay aside all our Thoughts of
 the World, that we may be at leisure for
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God? Remember, that not only in the Morning and Evening Devotion, but at *every Meal*, we appear before God: Now do we join in Prayer for a Blessing on our Food, and in giving Thanks? Or do we think the Word of one who speaks, sufficiently sanctifies and blesses the Meat for all who taste it?

Let us farther ask our Consciences this *one Question*, Do we remember God all the Day, as those who have appeared before him at Worship in the Morning? Do we walk among Men, as those who dwell in a House of God? Do we eat, and drink, and speak, and live; as those who profess so much Religion and Worship?

Let us think on these Things, and consider who there is among us that ventures to trifle with the great and dreadful God in such Appearances before him? Or provoke him with a Conversation unsuitable to such Professions?

Blessed be God, there is more than the Form of Godliness found in the governing Parts of this Family! And I am persuaded, that not the *Parlour* only, but the *meaner Rooms*, are Witnesses of Devotion and pious Discourse: But we are none of us above the need of Self-Enquiry; and as we all appear with our *Bodies* to worship God daily, methinks I would not have one *Soul* among us absent from God in this daily Worship.

Thus I have finished the *first general Head* of my Discourse.

Secondly, The Words of the Text discover to us an earnest *Longing after Divine Ordinances, and the Presence of God in them.* This abundantly appears also in several parts of this Psalm: How mournfully doth the Psalmist complain, and what a painful Sense he expresses of his long Absence from the House of God! ver. 3, 4. What a sweet and sorrowful Recollection he makes of past Seasons of Delight in Worship? *My Tears have been my Meat day and night, my Soul is cast down and disquieted. I remember when I went with the Multitude to the House of God, with the Voice of Joy and Praise; but now God seems to have forgotten me; ver. 9.* How earnestly doth he breathe after the Sanctuary? *Psal. lxxiii. & lxxxiv. to see thy Power, O God; and thy Glory, as he had seen it there.* He borrows Metaphors and Similitudes from some of the most vehement Appetites of Nature, to signify his strong Desires after God; *My Flesh thirsteth for thee, even fainteth for the Courts of the Living God.*

And this is the blessed Temper of a Christian, when in his right Frame; he is never satisfied when quite restrained from Divine Ordinances, whether by Persecution, by Banishment, by the unreasonable Laws of Men, or by Afflictions and Weaknesses laid on him by the Hand of God. He thinks over again those Seasons wherein he enjoy'd the

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Presence of God in Worship, and the Recollection of them encreases his Desires of their Return. He watches every Turn of Providence, and hopes it is working towards his Release : When he sees the Doors of his Prison begin to open, he is ready to break out of Confinement, and seize the Pleasure of publick Worship : He thinks it long till he appears before God again. " I have chosen God (saith he) for my highest Good, for my everlasting Portion, and I would willingly often resort to the Place where God hath promised to communicate his Blessings, and where I have so often tasted that the Lord is gracious."

REMARKS on the 2d Head.

1st Remark. *How very different are they from the Temper of David, who enjoy Publick Ordinances continually, and are weary of them? Who appear before God frequently on the Lord's-day, and yet cry, What a Weariness is it? When will the Sabbath be gone? Mal. i. 13. & iii. 14. Amos viii. 5. When shall we return to the World again?*

What is the Reason of this great Aversion to Divine Worship among those who call themselves Christians? Truly the greatest part have nothing of *Christianity* besides the meer Name : Some are *stupid Sinners*, and have no Sense of Divine Things ; and they think it is all lost time : They have no need.

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to come before God, but that it is the Custom of their Country, or of the Family where they live, and they must do it ; they do not know how to spend the Hour elsewhere without Reproof and Censure : Or they come meerly to see, and to be seen, as is the Fashion of the Land.

Some perhaps *have a Sense of Religion*, and yet they cannot look upon God any otherwise than as their Enemy, and so they come before him without any Love or Delight in his Company ; and then no wonder if they are weary of it. They do not come as Friends to take pleasure in his Presence ; they would be well enough pleased, if they could live for ever in this World, and never have any thing to do with God : Their chief Motive is the Fear of Hell, and therefore they drudge on in toilsome and undelightful Religion.

And indeed this is one great Reason why so many *true Christians* feel no more longing after God, either in publick, or in private Worship ; because, tho they have some Faith and some cold Hope, yet they are contented to abide in this State of Uncertainty, without Joy or Assurance, and do not make it their Business to advance in Christianity : They cannot rejoice in God as their Father, or their Friend, with a lively Soul ; and they find but little Pleasure in his House. But it is a Divine Pleasure, and a-kin to Heaven, when a Child of God, with a lively Faith and

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and joyful Spirit, comes before God as his God, and entertains himself with all the blessed Discoveries that he makes of his Wisdom and Grace in his Churches, with all the Promises of the Covenant, with all the Words of Love that God hath written in his Book, or publishes in his Ordinances by the Ministry of Men. He feeds upon Heavenly Provisions in his Father's House; and when he departs, he maintains on his Soul a sweet Savour of Heaven. But alas! there is a great Withdrawment of the Spirit of God from his Churches; a Deadness of Heart has seized Believers in our Day, and they grow carnal: O pray that the Spirit may return to the Sanctuary again!

2d Remark. *How comfortable a Thing would it be, to feel our Souls longing for Divine Ordinances more earnestly after Restraint! We should learn the Language of Jonah, when in the Belly of the Whale; Lord, I am cast out of thy sight, yet I will look again toward thy holy Temple, Jonah ii. 4. I will look while I am at a distance, and pray toward the Mercy-Seat, in Hope and Desire to come near the Sanctuary.*

We are too ready to grow indifferent, and think we can do well enough without this appearing before God! We grow, as it were, Strangers to him by long Absence; and tho' the Sacred Correspondence in publick be lost, yet sometimes it is not much regretted:

This is a frequent Distemper of the Soul. When Fasting encreases a regular Appetite, it is a sign of a healthy Constitution; but weakly Natures are so overwhelm'd with a little Fasting, that their Appetite is gone too. Many Christians may complain of this, and say, "Tho' I find some relish of Pleasure when I am in the House of God, and amongst his Saints; and tho'twas very painful to me to endure the first Months of Confinement, yet a long Restraint has brought me under the spiritual Disease, that my Appetite and Desire grow feeble, and my Heart too indifferent to Publick Worship."

Now in order to enquire into the Temper of our Spirits, and to awaken us to greater Longings after Divine Ordinances, let us consider what are the two chief Ends of a Christian in his Appearance before God: It is either to do something for God by a publick Profession of his Name among Men, or to receive something from him in order to our own Comfort and Salvation. If we hope to receive, this calls Faith into exercise; if we endeavour to do something for his Service, this awakens our Zeal. Now, is our Faith active? Is our Zeal lively in this matter? Some Christians have one of these, some the other most in exercise: Some look most at honouring God in a publick Profession, some at obtaining some sensible Benefit and Delight to their own

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own Souls: But 'tis best when both of these invite us to the Sanctuary, and make us long after the Presence of God.

Some of us (it may be) have found the Work of Grace and Salvation begun on our Souls at publick Worship; there we were first awaken'd and convinc'd of Sin, there we were first led to the Knowledge and Faith of Christ, and pardoning Grace was revealed with Power by the Ministry of the Word; therefore we long after *the sincere Milk of the Word*, in the same publick Dispensation of it, *that we may grow thereby.* Others have been favour'd, it may be, with the Presence of God more abundantly in secret; and Reading, and Meditation, and secret Prayer, have been the chief sensible Instruments of their Conversion, Sanctification, and Peace: These, therefore, sometimes have not the same earnest Longing after publick Preaching as others have; yet they do continually attend on the Ordinances of Christ in publick, to maintain Religion, in the Profession of it, among Men; and they ought to do it. But these Persons are most in danger of growing cold and indifferent.

I grant 'tis a glorious and self-denying Temper, to maintain a warm Zeal to do much for the Honour of God in the World, even though we enjoy but little of him; but this is not so frequent among Men: For we are usually drawn to God by the Blessings we

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hope to receive; and we should consider, that an utter Neglect of all those Enjoyments of God in the sensible Increase of Grace and Joy, which are to be found in publick Worship, is a sign that our Faith runs too low: We do not expect to receive much from God, even in his own appointed Methods; and therefore we grow negligent whether we worship him in publick or no. O let the Soul who feels nothing of this Negligence, but maintains a warm Desire of Ordinances under long Restraint, rejoice and bless the Lord!

However, while any of us are confined, our Desires after God ought to appear in this, that we often seek him in secret, and are perpetually with him in our Thoughts; that we take all proper Opportunities to lift up our Souls to him in the midst of common Affairs, and thus do what we can to make up the Loss of the Sanctuary: But we should be still breathing also after Church-Worship, and the Communion of Saints; for *God loveth the Gates of Zion more than all the Dwellings of Jacob, Psal. lxxxvii. 2.*

3d Remark. *O what unhappy Clogs these fleshly sinful Bodies are to the Mind!* How they contradict the best Inclinations of the Soul, and forbid it to fulfil its spiritual Desires! The Soul would appear often before God, but the Flesh forbids: The Spirit would rejoice to be among Christian Assemblies, but the

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the Body is too often confined by Sickness, or by the necessary Cares that relate to this Life, this poor animal Life, that has so troublesome an Influence upon the noblest Enjoyments of the Mind.

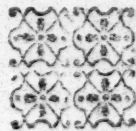
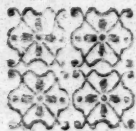
The Soul would wait upon God whole Hours together in praising, in praying, in hearing the Word ; but the Body is weak, overwhelmed with a little Attention, and can bear no more. The Soul wrestles and strives against the Infirmities of the Flesh, and labours hard to abide with God ; but these very Wrestlings and Strivings overcome languishing Nature : the Impotence of the Flesh prevails against the sprightliest Efforts and Vigor of the Mind ; the Flesh prevails, and the Spirit must yield. Thus we are dragged down from the holy Mount of Converse with God, and the Soul, who is a-kin to Angels, and employ'd in their Work, must descend, and lie idle, to refresh the Animal. In vain would the Spirit raise all its Powers into lively and devout Exercise, if the Flesh grows faints under a warm Affection, 'tis forced to let go the holy Thought, and quit the Divine Pleasures of Religion, 'till a better Hour return.

Sometimes, thro' Drowsiness, and want of natural Spirits, we grow stupid and heavy in religious Duties, and have but little Sense of that God before whom we appear. Sometimes, thro' Excess of Spirits, our Imagina-
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tion grows vain and fluttering, and wanders far away from the God whom we worship. If we fix our Thoughts one minute upon Things of the highest Importance, and the most awful Solemnity; the next flying Idea catches the Mind away, and 'tis lost from God and Devotion again: We appear before God, and disappear again; we wander into the World, and return to God, twenty times in an Hour.

Our Eyes and our Ears are constant Witnesses of this painful Weakness; and unhappy Instruments they are to draw off our Souls from the divinest Meditation. Every thing around us is ready to disturb and divert our feeble Nature in the most heavenly Acts of Worship: Poor broken Worship! Poor frail Estate of human Nature! But there is a blessed Assembly of better Worshipers above: Awake our Faith and Desire to join them! and let each of us say, "O when shall I go to that bright Company, and appear amongst them before God!"

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S E R M O N XIV.

Appearance before God here and here-
after.

P S A L M xlii. 2.

— *When shall I come and appear
before God!*

The Second Part.

Y an *Appearance before God*, in the
Text, we are to understand *our*
Attendance upon him in the publick
Ordinances of Worship; and the
longing Desire the Psalmist had
to draw near unto God in his Ordinances,
represents to us the Character of every sin-
cere Christian, when he enjoys his own right
Frame, and heavenly Temper of Soul: He
longs, he breathes after those Seasons of Di-
vine Improvement and Comfort.

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I shall make no further Repetition of any thing before delivered ; but considering that all our *Appearances before God* in this World in his Sanctuary, are but Means to prepare us to *stand before God* in the World that is to come ; I shall not think my self at all to wander from the Text, if I spend my whole time, at present, in showing the *Difference* that is between our *Appearance before God on Earth* here, and our *Appearing before him in the other World* hereafter ; and this in order to awaken the *Sinner*, and to encourage the true *Christian*.

There are two great future *Appearances before God*, the one at *Judgment*, and the other in *Glory in Heaven* : The one belongs to all Men, the other only to the Saints. And now, that I may divide my Discourse aright, and give to every one their Portion, I would beg leave chiefly to apply our *General Appearance before God at Judgment*, to those who are *unconverted*, and in a State of Sin ; for we have reason to fear there may be some such among us : And I will apply the *blessed Appearance before God in Heaven* to converted Souls, to whom only it belongs : These are the Persons who have Faith and Love, and are in some measure prepared to appear and worship there.

First then, Let us consider our *Appearance before God in Judgment*. 'Tis true, at the moment of Death our Souls immediately stand before

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before God to be judged, as well as our Souls and Bodies united, shall stand together there in the great Day of the Resurrection; yet I shall not make any Distinction of these Seasons now, lest I should multiply Particulars; but shall treat of them together, to awaken the secure and sinful Worshipper, who appears before God here in the Form of Devotion: And to put him in mind he must e'er long stand before God in another manner than now he does, and to set his Thoughts at work to compare one with the other, in these Particulars:

1. *The Sinner now appears with some Degree of Willingness in the Presence of God, then is under a terrible Constraint.* A wicked Man may be willing to come to publick Ordinances for many carnal Ends, as to comply with his Superiors, to follow the Custom of the Family where he dwells, to gain Reputation among Men, to satisfy the Cries of an awaken'd Conscience; for his Conscience, perhaps, won't be easy without the Performance of some Duties: and so he makes use of Divine Worship, and his publick Appearances before God, as a kind of Opiate, to stupify an uneasy Conscience, and therefore he has some Inclination and Willingness to come before God here on Earth: but at Death, and at the general Resurrection, he must appear whether he will or no, *Heb. ix. 27. It is appointed for all once to die, and after Death the*
Judg-

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Judgment; Rom. xiv. 10; And 2 Cor. v. 10. *We must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ.* The Angels shall gather the Elect from the four Quarters of the World, and bring them near to the Judge with pleasure; but Sinners shall be dragged toward that awful Tribunal, and be forced to abide the Trial.

While the Believer, who walks in lively Faith, says, *When shall I come into that World of Spirits, and appear there before God?* the Sinner wishes that Day may never come: "O that I might live for ever on Earth!" "that I might for ever converse with Men," "and never see the Face of that God who hates me, and whom I have never loved." "O that Death might make an utter end of me! O that the Grave would cover me for ever, that I might rise no more!" And when that dreadful Day comes, then, "Fall on us, Rocks; then, Mountains press us down, and conceal us for ever from the Wrath of God and the Lamb:" as in *Revel. vi. 15, 16.* that Outcry is represented. But they must stand and see the Terror; they are constrained to hear the glorious and dreadful Sentence. Dost thou believe this, O my [Soul! and canst thou be content to live unprepared for the Solemnities of this Day?

2. Here Sinners appear like the Saints of God, in disguise; but there as Sinners, openly guilty and exposed to Light: Here not separated from the Saints in the Place of Worship, there

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there sufficiently distinguished and divided from all who love God, and that worship him in Spirit : For when a sinful Soul goes out of the Body to *appear before God*, every Angel in Heaven knows him ; he is naked without a Covering of Disguise, as well as without the Covering of a justifying Righteousness ; and upon this account he appears all guilty, not only before the searching Eye of God, and the Terror of his Anger, but also before the blessed Spirits who are near the Throne. ¶ Here those who are in the same Assembly, know not whether we are the Children of God, or the Children of the Devil ; but in the World of Spirits, all the Children of *Satan* are as much distinguished from the Children of God, as an Angel of Light is from a Spirit of Darkness.

This Flesh is a Disguise to the Soul, a thick Cloud to cover a thousand Hypocrisies ; but at the Great Day the naked Soul must be known : *All Nations shall be gathered before him, and he shall separate them one from another, as a Shepherd divideth his Sheep from the Goats ;* Matt. xxv. 32. *Jesus shall separate the one from the other : and what will the Sinner say at that Day ?* “ I have on “ Earth appeared before God among the “ Saints, but now I must for ever dwell with “ my Companions in Iniquity, with my Partners in everlasting Burnings : I am so like “ to the Spirits of Hell, now I am undressed, “ sed,

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“ fed, and divested of all Disguise, that I
 “ see my self justly divided for ever from
 “ the Saints, and a fit Companion for none
 “ but Devils.” O who can tell the Tor-
 ment that is contained in such a self-condemn-
 ing Reflection as this ?

3. *Sinners appear now, and take no notice of God as Creator, or Christ as Mediator and Saviour ; but at the Appearance in Judgment, it will be impossible to stand before God, and not take notice of him.* He appears there as a God of terrible and incensed Majesty, and they must see him ; and *Jesus Christ* sits there, and must be seen, not as the *Saviour* to secure them, but the *Judge* ready to condemn them to everlasting Punishment. *Revel. i. 7.* assures us of this Day, and speaks of it as already come: *Behold he cometh with Clouds, and every Eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him ; and all Kindreds of the Earth shall wail because of him. I shall behold him, (says the wretched Balaam) but not nigh ; Numb. xxiv. 17.* not as my God, near me, but as my Enemy, afar from me. “ Now God “ speaks with the Voice of Mercy in the “ Church, and I turn a deaf Ear to him, “ (may the Sinner say) but then ’tis the “ Language of Justice and Vengeance: O “ that my Ears and my Eyes were sealed up “ for ever ! for his Looks, his Words, his “ Actions, smite my Soul through with a “ thousand Torments.”

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It is impossible for the Wicked to turn their Eyes from God in that Day, whereas now for a whole Hour or two, in his Worship, their Hearts are at once fixed upon him. A God of Holiness will be seen on his Seat of Judgment; and the Sinner who will not see, shall see, and be confounded at the sight. Think of this, O my Soul! and when thou findest thy Thoughts wandering from God in the next Duty of Worship, take this awful Hint to recal them again.

4. Now the Sinner appears before God as on a Throne of Grace, there on a Throne of Justice; now in a State of Trial, there for a final Sentence. He ^{also} comes now to hear the general Language of God to Men, there to hear his own particular Judgment from the same God: Now the Sinner stands in the Church, in a general Assembly; and he stands within the reach of a general Promise; *He that believes shall be saved; he that confesses, and forsakes his Sin, shall find Mercy:* But then the Book of all the Promises is for ever shut, and it is declared by the Judge, that not one of them belongs to him: He hath refused all the Offers of Grace, and the Day of Grace is gone for ever.

Now he stands, and hears the general Threatning of the Word: *The Soul that sins shall die; the Wages of Sin is Death; He that believeth not shall be damned; He that sows to the Flesh, shall of the Flesh reap Corruption:*
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Yet he may escape all these Threatnings. But in the Great and Last Day, he hears his own Name, as it were, read together with each of these Threatnings, and united to them all: "Thou art the impenitent Sinner, and thou must die for ever; thou hast not believed in *Christ*, and thou art the Person who shall be for ever damned."

Now he appears before God, and though he is, as to his State, at a distance from him, yet he may be converted and brought near; he hears these blessed Words, *Matt. xi. 28. Come, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Isa. xlv. 22. Look unto me, ye that are at the Ends of the Earth, (and in immediate Danger of Hell) and be ye saved.* But there the only Word is, *Depart from me, ye Cursed, into everlasting Fire*; for I have not one Word of Promise, of Encouragement, or of Comfort for you.

Because he appears now in a State of Trial, it is with some Hope of obtaining Pardon; but there he stands only waiting for the Sentence of Death, and therefore with everlasting Despair: He appears there guilty in open Light, and his Condemnation is certain and unchangeable.

Believe this, Sinner, now in this Life; the *Wrath of God* lies heavy upon you, *John iii. 36.* but this Wrath may be removed; the Condemnation that is now upon you from the Law, may be reversed; the Gospel is ready

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to take it off, if you receive this Gospel: But there, before the Judgment-Seat, every Soul who is found in his Sins, falls under an eternal Curse, and without repeal: that Condemnation shall never be removed; for immediate Execution follows upon the Sentence.

Now the Sinner appears before God, and hears such Words of Compassion as these are:

"I delight not in the Death of a Sinner, I would

have him turn and live; I propose the Me-

thod of Reconciliation and Life:" But *then*

the Lord sits upon a Throne of Judgment,

and he shall *laugh at the Calamity* of the Wic-

ked, and the obstinate Sinner's Distress; for

Pity and Compassion are for ever hid from his

Eyes. Now who is there among us able to

bear the sight of a provoked God, who is in-

finite in Power, terrible in Majesty, and has

abandon'd all Compassion.

5. *The Sinner now appears often before God,*

there but once, and is for ever driven from his

Presence: Here, if you meet with no Comfort

from God in one Ordinance, you may find it

in the next; but then you shall be punished

with everlasting Destruction from the Presence of

the Lord, and the Glory of his Power; 2 Thess.

1. 9. How will you long for such Seasons a-

gain, when you are for ever shut out from

them? "O that I had but one Lord's-Day

"more to spend in the Service of God!

"how would I labour and wrestle with

"God in Prayer, that I might become a

"new

“new Creature!” But in Hell the Days are all alike, they are all dark and stormy, there is not one Day of Sunshine, not one Sabbath, not one Hour of Rest. “How did I mock God on Earth, (must the Sinner say) when I appeared before him! and after I had mocked him once, I trifled again and again; but now I find he is a God who will not be mocked; I see he is a terrible Majesty, and I am driven for ever from all his Grace and his Compassion, and shall see his Face no more.”

Use. All the *Use* that I shall make of this Head, is only to urge upon your Minds a *practical Belief, and a lively Sense of this Appearance before God at Judgment.* Must we all stand before the Judgment-Seat of Christ? Do we think we are ready? What Answer do our own Consciences give, when we make that Enquiry? Am I prepared to appear before God the Judge? Have I but little Hope, and yet can I satisfy my self to lie down at Night, and arise in the Morning, and have this Hope not encreased? Have I so little Expectation of my appearing well there, and yet rest contented under it?

Do I worship now with that Sincerity and Devotion, as those who must hereafter come to be judged? Could we, dare we, indulge our selves in the Neglect of any Duty, or Commission of any Sin, or careless Performance of the religious Services we owe to God,

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God, at the rate now we do, had this great Appearance before God at Judgment been often upon our Thoughts? Alas! these things vanish from our Minds, many times, together with the Breath and Air that forms the Words: Business, or Cares, or the Diversions of this Life, turn away the Soul from God and Judgment. We dwell in Flesh, we see not God, and we are ready, foolishly, to imagine that we shall never see him: We thrust this Hour at such a distance, as tho' it would never come; we *put it afar off* as an *Evil Day*.

But let us stand still here, and consider a little: This Evening we are come to appear before God in Worship; we see our selves here, and see each other; we are sure it is a *Reality*, and not a *Dream*; yet seven Years ago, this Evening was at so vast a distance from us, that we scarce knew how to realize it to our Thoughts, and make it, as it were, present: but now all that long Distance is vanished, and this Evening is come; those Days are all passed, and this Hour is upon us. Thus it is in the Case of Death and Judgment. Seven Years hence, it is most likely, some one or more of us, and perhaps every one of us, shall appear before the Bar of God our Judge; that appointed Hour will come, however it seem afar off now; and then it will be as *real* an Appearance as this present Hour is, but a
much

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much more *solemn* one : we shall see and feel our selves there, and know 'tis not a *Dream*, but an *awful Reality*.

Consider further, that it can be but a few seven Years more, before every one of us must certainly appear at the Judgment-Seat of God ; and as long as those Years seem now, yet they will quickly fly away, and the last Hour will be upon us. Think how many of your Acquaintance, in seven Years past, have made their Appearance before God, have past their final Trial, and received their everlasting Sentence : And each of us may say, " Why should not I be the next ? What " is there in my Nature, or in my Circum-
stances, that can secure me against the " Summons of Death and Judgment ? " It may be but a few Days before we are called ; and is every one of us here ready ? This is a Question of infinite Importance, and let us not give rest to our Souls till we can answer it to our Satisfaction.

O how should we live ! how should we act ! how should we speak ! how should we worship ! if this were always upon our Hearts ! O that we could but realize these awful Things to our Minds, and make them more familiar to our Thoughts daily ! Could Sinners then be one Day contented without converting Grace, and without a justifying Righteousness ? Could they any longer refuse the Mercy of the Gospel, and

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Jesus the Saviour? Could they be satisfied to appear all guilty before God, and no Friend there to speak for them? no Intercessor to plead for them? none to undertake their Cause? Could they go on to sin with a negligent Mind, if they thought the Judgment-Door just opening upon them, and *Jesus Christ* at hand? Could it be possible we should have such cold and lazy Desires after a Saviour and his Salvation, if we thought our everlasting Happiness or Misery depended upon the next Day, the next Hour, or the next Moment? For we know not how soon the Summons may come, and state us before his Tribunal.

II. The *Second Part* of my Discourse leads me to consider the *blessed Difference* that there shall be between a Christian's appearing before God in Heaven, and his Appearance here in divine Ordinances before God on Earth? and by a Comparison of these two, may the Spirit of God awaken our Faith, our Hope, our Love, and our Joy, and all join to promote our Sanctification!

The Differences then between our standing before God in Worship now, and our worshipping before God in Heaven, are such as these:

1st, Now the true Christian appears in a mix'd Assembly of Saints and Sinners, there the Assembly is all holy, and not one Sinner amongst them. Here sincere Souls and Hypocrites meet together in Worship, there the Hypocrite is for
U ever

ever banished. In the Houses of God, on Earth, the wicked *Canaanites* will mingle with the Children of *Israel*; but in his Temple, in Heaven, every one is an *Israelite* indeed: *There shall no more be found a Canaanite in the House of the Lord of Hosts*, Zech. xiv. 21.

The Children of God here, are under a Vail of infirm and sinful Flesh, and in the Likeness of Sinners; there they are unvail'd, and acknowledged to be the Sons and Daughters of the Almighty; 1 *John* iii. 1, 2. *Behold, what manner of Love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God!* But the *World* knows us not; nay, we are not many times known to our selves; but when he comes, whom we have trusted, then he shall be known and distinguished from the World, as God's only begotten Son; and we shall be known and distinguished as the Children of God, all related and a-kin to him: *When he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is*; and shall sufficiently be distinguished from all who belong not to *Christ*.

Here a Child of God, in the Sanctuary, is deeply humbled at the Mention of the Name of God; but his Humility is not seen. Here his Zeal kindles at the Proposal of a Duty, but it burns with a hidden Flame: Here his Love is at work, his Hope is arising, his Joy is getting up to Heaven, when he is engaged in the Meditation of a comfortable Promise,

mise,

mise, or some of the blessed Privileges of the Children of God; while those who are around him, even his next Neighbour who sits close to him, knows nothing of the holy Workings of his Heart, and the Breathings of his Soul towards God: But there the whole Assembly shall worship with one Heart, and one Soul, and not one wandering Worshipper, or one wandering Thought in Worship.

We are ready to complain *here*, that we our selves know not whether we shall be accepted or no; thro' the Weakness of Faith, Want of Holiness, Decay of Zeal in our Spirits, and that Degeneracy we sometimes find and feel in our selves, we are often ready to doubt, and almost upon the Borders of Despair. This is the Case of many a poor trembling Christian; but *there* every one shall worship with Strength of Joy, liveliest Delight, and warmest Zeal and Affection; and be assured his Graces are all true, for he shall see them all in the Light of Glory.

This Suspicion or Jealousy of our selves, flattens our Devotion many a time *here*, and takes away the pleasurable Sensations of Religion, because we our selves know not whether God accepts us or no: *There* a full Assurance of our being beloved of God, and being for ever accepted of him, shall make every Exercise of Devotion a most agreeable and perfect Pleasure. O my Soul, how should it quicken thy Race, and

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exalt thy Joy, to think how fast thou art removing from this World of Sinners, and from all thy own Doubts and Fears, to a glorious Assembly of holy Souls, where not one Doubt, or Fear, shall remain in their Consciences, nor in thine!

2dly, In this World *the Saint appears among a few to worship his God, but then among Millions.* Now many times we have worshipped in a secret Corner, for fear of Men; but then 'tis all in publick Glory; for there all the Worship that is paid, is the established Worship of the whole Country; and Honours, and Kingdoms, and Wealth, are all on that side: All the Inhabitants are made rich for ever, with the Riches of Heaven; and all the Children of God are Sons and Daughters of a King, and all Heirs and Possessors of Glory, and reign together with the Lord *Jesus*; Rom. viii. 17. 2 Tim. ii. 12.

Here many times the Children of God are forced to be Separatists from their Neighbours and Fellow-Citizens, they are divided from the Multitudes and Crowds of Mankind; they are but a *little Flock*; but there they shall shine in the midst of the *general Assembly of the First-born*, and a *great Multitude which no Man can number*, Revel. vii. 9. that with Victories and Songs are for ever addressing the Throne of God and the Lamb. O when shall I hear the Voice from Heaven say, *Come up hither*?

3dly,

3dly, Now we worship in a way of Preparation, there for Enjoyment and full Delight. Ordinances here are but slight Shadows, and very faint and imperfect Resemblances, of what the Worship in Heaven shall be. Now the Word of God is spoken by a Man, and it loses much of the Divinity and Power, by the Means of Conveyance; there it will be spoken by God himself to our Spirits, or by our Lord *Jesus Christ*, to the Ears of our Bodies, raised, sanctified, and immortal; and our Souls shall receive as much of the express Idea's, as God designs to convey by all his Conversation with that sanctified Number: Nor shall they miss of any of the Beauty, or Spirit, or Perfection, of those Thoughts which God himself would impress upon us.

Now in the Letters of the Bible we read the Good-will and Mercy of God to Sinners; but *there*, in a far brighter Manner of Conveyance, *in thy Light shall we see Light*, Psal. xxxvi. 9. *Here* we seek the Father and the Son; the one as our Happiness, the other as the Way to the Enjoyment of that Happiness, as they are usually represented in the Word of God: *There* we shall say, "We have found him whom our Souls desire and love, and shall be for ever happy in his Presence." Our Business *now* in this World is to get a right Temper and Frame; *there* to practise and indulge the Joy. Happy Souls, who are thus prepared in the outer Courts

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to draw nigh, and worship within the Vail!

4thly, Now we appear with imperfect Services, and poor Improvements, there with glorious and compleat Worship: For here we see God but as in a Glass darkly, there face to face, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Now we can have his Glory, or his Grace, represented to us but in part, in a small Measure, and according to our poor Capacities of receiving; there we shall see him as he is, and know as we are known.

What are our Prayers, what are our Praises here? our Praises when offered up in a Song, or in plainer Language, in comparison with those that are paid to God above? Now we speak of him whom we have not seen, therefore we speak in so imperfect a Manner: There we shall hear and speak of him whom we see and know more intimately: Now we appear before God, and bring too much of the World with us, there we leave the World, and go to the Father. God and Christ are too much forgotten, or they are too often thrust out of our Minds by vain Thoughts, even when we our selves are never so desirous to spend an Hour or two with God; what Interruptions do we find? What long Blanks divide the several Petitions of our Prayer, and break off the Meditation while we stand before God to worship him? We have many Enemies within and without, who stand ready to seize away our Souls from God, and to rob him of our Devotion: Vain Fancies call

call us aside, and our Senses turn off our Minds from Heaven. There shall be everlasting Worship above, without one Impertinence interposing; no Trifles *there* to divert us, and separate one part of our Worship from the other: *there* all the Powers and Faculties of Nature shall perpetually be engaged in the Business and Blessedness of that State. Glorious Worship, and blessed Worshipers! fit for the Presence of the Majesty of Heaven!

5thly, I might say, *We come with very little Comfort, and many Discouragements, to appear before God on Earth; but there with everlasting Consolation.* We come now to the Word, and we go away again, hardly hearing the Voice of God in his Word, or seeing his Countenance, but *there* we shall be for ever near him; no Wall of Flesh, or of Sin, to divide us.

Now we are defiled with Guilt, and ashamed to lift up our Faces towards Heaven, and blush even when our Hearts are never so sincere; but *there* we shall come near to God, even to God in Glory, and not be afraid of him; *there* we shall see a God undefiled, our selves also being undefiled; a God of spotless Purity, and our selves without Blemish before the Throne; our Garments washed white in the Blood of the Lamb, and never, never to be defiled again; that is the Glory and Pleasure of a Christian.

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Then we shall appear without Spot, or Wrinkle, or any such Thing; without Guile in our Mouths, or Vanity in our Hearts; without Fault before God, and therefore without Pain, without Sorrow, and without Fear for ever, even though we stand before God in all his Majesty; for we are assured of his Mercy. Now we worship with Prayers and Tears, because of many and heavy Burdens, Sorrows, and Sins; but *then with everlasting Songs and Joy on our Heads, Isa. xxxv. 10.* If we had a painful and living Sense of these Things, of the Wanderings, Temptations, Burdens, and Defilements, that mingle with our Worship here, we should cry aloud, and say, "How long, O Lord, how long!"

6. Lastly, Now we appear and depart again, but then we shall abide with God for ever. Now we go down from the Mount of Converse with God, into the World of Temptation, and Sin, and Business, and Care: We appear upon Mount *Horeb*, or *Pisgah*, and we take a little View of the promised Land; but we go down again as the Children of *Israel* did, to fight with the *Canaanites*, the Giants that are in the Valley, our mighty Sins, our strong Corruptions. In this Valley of Tears we must have a Conflict before we get to the promised Land. There every Worshipper has in his Hand a Palm of compleat Victory, *Revel. vii. 9.* and he is for ever discharged from fighting: *Him that overcometh will*

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will I make a Pillar in the Temple of my God; and he shall go no more out; Rev. iii. 12. So necessary is the Presence of the Saints in Heaven, that our Lord *Jesus Christ* has represented them as *Pillars* of that Building. God dwelling in the midst of his Saints, counts himself dwelling in one of his glorious Heavens; and every Saint there is, as it were, a *Pillar*, and a Support of it: We are *living Stones* in that *Building* in which God will for ever inhabit.

Now we come to the House of God as *Visitors*, but there as *Inhabitants*, as the Children of God, who *abide for ever in the House*: There every Saint obtains what holy *David* wished for, and that in the literal Perfection of it, that he might *dwell in the House of the Lord for ever*, Psal. xxvii. 4. and xxiii. 6.

Use. The only *Reflection* I shall make on the second Part of my Discourse, is this, That we should raise our Hope, our Consolation, and our Joy, by a Meditation of such future *Worship in Heaven*, as this is, when we lie under many *Weaknesses, Restraints, and Defilements*, in our best *Worship on Earth*. O! how would this Hope rejoice our Hearts, if we could but live upon it! What sacred Comfort would it be to a poor humble Soul who is hindered from drawing near to God in *Worship now*, because his Affections are perpetually ready to wander, to think that he shall come and appear before God *hereafter*, and see him with-

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out ceasing, and his Thoughts shall never wander from his God. When he complains under the Temptations of *Satan*, and Absence of God from his Ordinances, what a Pleasure to think he is going above to worship at the general Assembly, where *Satan* never enters, and where God never conceals himself, but appears universally gracious, and without a Frown; where the God of Glory and Mercy appears unchangeably and for ever the same.

Those of us who have been long restrained from all the Pleasure and Profit of publick Ordinances, what a blessed Release will it be to our Souls, when we shall be dismissed from the Bonds of Flesh, into that great and holy Society of Spirits, and shall feel no more Restraints for ever? We who have been detained from the House of God, by the uncharitable Laws of Men, or the painful Providence of God, with what a divine Relish shall we embrace our Liberty in that Day, and be eternally free from all forbidding Laws, and all imprisoning Providences?

O how heartily should it engage our Affections to one another, and increase the Pleasure of our Worship, when we come to wait on God together here below, to think that we shall worship God together in the upper World? How should it unite the Hearts of our Congregations one to another in divine Love, and make Christians
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for ever forbear Wrath and Anger here, since they must be everlasting Fellow-Worshippers above?

What a glorious Joy will it be to you who are the Heads and Rulers of this Family, who have so often joined in sweet Devotion here on Earth, when you shall meet each other there, and worship together before the Throne in Heaven? What a mutual Endearment, and mutual Delight does such a Prospect raise between the nearest Relations? How doth it exalt the sweetest Passion, heighten and refine the warmest Love? What a blessed Transport will it be to the Parents, to find their Children there, engaged in the same Work? And what a joyful Meeting will it be to you, the Children, the hopeful Offspring of this House, to find each other in that Company, and to see your pious Parents with you? With what a glorious and unspeakable Joy shall Parents render up their Accounts to God in this Language, "*Lord, here am I, and the Children that thou hast given me;*" imitating the Words of the Lord Jesus, giving up his Account to his Father? *Heb. ii. 13.*

How will our Gladness encrease, and our Souls enlarge themselves in holy Joy, to behold our Christian Friends, and our dear Relatives, standing in the same Assembly, as Fellow-Worshippers at the Throne? How will the Heads of this Family rejoice, if their whole

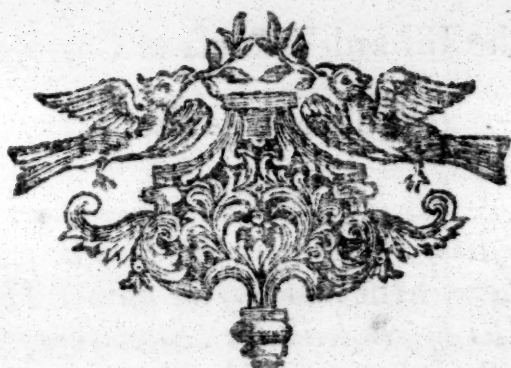
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whole Household shall be found there, whom they have endeavoured to encourage in their way to Heaven, by a religious Care to maintain Household-Worship? How will the Joy of faithful Ministers be advanced by every one of their Hearers, whom they shall find in that blessed Church above? *Ye are our Crown, and our Glory, and our Rejoicing in that Day;* 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20.

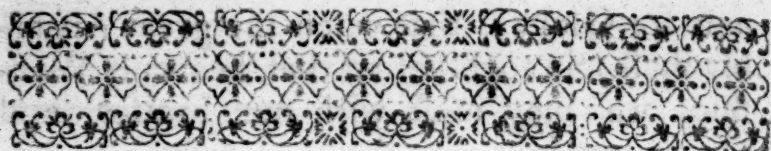
Now should not each of us maintain a holy Jealousy within our selves, and say, Which of us shall be missing? May not every one of us so far suspect our selves, as to say, *Lord, is it I?* Shall I be wanting there, when all the rest of this little Assembly shall be worshipping with the Saints in Heaven? Shall I be separated from them with whom I have so often appeared before God, and bowed the Knee together on Earth? O dreadful Thought of overwhelming Sorrow! Which of us all has so much Stupidity, or such impious Courage, as to bear the terrible Apprehension? To be divided for ever from the Family of God, and shut out of his upper Sanctuary! O may these Words make a proper Impression on every Heart, to keep our Jealousy awake, and spur us onward in our Christian Course of Duty and Devotion! May such Thoughts as these excite us to *give all Diligence, to make our Calling and Election sure,* and in every Act of Worship here in this World, to get some clearer Evidence of an Interest
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in the Favour of God, some further Meet-
ness for Glory ; that when the great Assem-
bly shall join together in that heavenly Wor-
ship, we may assist with our Praises, and
mingle our Joys with theirs. *Amen.*



DIVINE



DIVINE HYMNS,

*Suited to every Subject in the foregoing
S E R M O N S.*



On the Inward Witness to Christianity.

In Long Metre.

I.

***** Questions and Doubts be heard no more :
* Q * Let Christ and Joy be all our Theme ;
***** His Spirit seals his Gospel sure,
To every Soul that trusts his Name.

2.

Jesus, thy Witness speaks within ;
The Mercy which thy Words reveal,
Refines the Heart from Sense and Sin,
And stamps its own Celestial Seal.

3.

'Tis God's inimitable Hand
That moulds and forms the Heart anew ;
Blasphemers can no more withstand,
But bow and own thy Doctrine true.

4. The

4.

*The guilty Wretch that trusts thy Blood,
Finds Peace and Pardon at the Cross;
The sinful Soul averse to God,
Believes and loves his Maker's Laws.*

5.

*Learning and Wit may cease their Strife,
When Miracles with Glory shine;
The Voice that calls the Dead to Life,
Must be Almighty and Divine.*

In Common Metre.

1.

Witness, ye Saints, that Christ is true;
Tell how his Name imparts
The Life of Grace and Glory too;
Ye have it in your Hearts.

2.

*The heavenly Building is begun
When ye receive the Lord;
His Hands shall lay the crowning Stone,
And well perform his Word.*

3.

*Your Souls are form'd by Wisdom's Rules,
Your Joys and Graces shine;
You need no Learning of the Schools,
To prove your Faith Divine.*

4.

*Let Heathens scoff, and Jews oppose,
Let Satan's Bolts be hurl'd;*

There's

*There's something wrought within you shows
That Jesus saves the World.*



*Flesh and Spirit ; or, the Principles of Sin
and Holiness.*

I.

W*hat vain Desires, and Passions vain,
Attend this mortal Clay !
Oft have they pierc'd my Soul with Pain,
And drawn my Heart astray.*

2.

*How have I wander'd from my God,
And following Sin and Shame,
In this vile World of Flesh and Blood
Defil'd my nobler Frame !*

3.

*For ever blessed be thy Grace
That form'd my Spirit new,
And made it of an Heaven-born Race,
Thy Glory to pursue.*

4.

*My Spirit holds perpetual War,
And wrestles and complains,
And views the happy Moment near,
That shall dissolve its Chains.*

5.

*Cheerful in Death I close my Eyes,
To part with every Lust,*

And

*And charge my Flesh when e'er it rise,
To leave them in the Dust.*

6.

*How would my purer Spirit fear
To put this Body on,
If its old tempting Powers were there,
Nor Lusts nor Passions gone!*

The Soul drawing near to God in Prayer.

1.

M*Y God, I bow before thy Feet,
When shall my Soul get near thy Seat?
When shall I see thy glorious Face,
With mingled Majesty and Grace?*

2.

*How I should love thee, and adore,
With Hopes and Joys unknown before!
And bid this trifling World be gone,
Nor teize my Heart so near thy Throne!*

3.

*Creatures with all their Charms should fly
The Presence of a God so nigh:
My darling Sins should lose their Name,
And grow my Hatred, and my Shame.*

4.

*My Soul shall pour out all her Cares,
In flowing Words, or flowing Tears;
Thy Smiles would ease my sharpest Pain,
Nor should I seek my God in vain.*

Sins

Sins and Sorrows spread before God.

1.

O That I knew the secret Place,
Where I might find my God!
I'd spread my Wants before his Face,
And pour my Woes abroad.

2.

I'd tell him how my Sins arise,
What Sorrows I sustain;
How Grace decays, and Comfort dies,
And leaves my Heart in pain.

3.

I'd say, "How Flesh and Sense rebel!
"What inward Foes combine
"With the vain World, and Powers of Hell,
"To vex this Soul of mine!"

4.

He knows what Arguments I'd take,
To wrestle with my God;
I'd plead for his own Mercy's Sake,
And for my Saviour's Blood.

5.

My God will pity my Complaints,
And heal my broken Bones:
He takes the Meaning of his Saints,
The Language of their Groans.

6.

Arise, my Soul, from deep Distress,
And banish every Fear;
He calls thee to his Throne of Grace,
To spread thy Sorrows there.

A Hopeful Youth falling short of Heaven.

1.

MUST all the Charms of Nature then,
 So hopeless to Salvation prove?
 Can Hell demand, can Heaven condemn
 The Man whom Jesus deigns to love?

2.

The Man, who sought the Ways of Truth,
 Paid Friends and Neighbours all their Due;
 (A modest, sober, lovely Youth)
 And thought he wanted nothing now?

3.

But mark the Change: Thus spake the Lord,
 Come part with Earth for Heaven to day:
 The Youth astonish'd at the Word,
 In silent Sadness went his Way.

4.

Poor Verities, that he boasted so,
 This Test unable to endure,
 Let Christ, and Grace, and Glory go,
 To make his Land and Money sure!

5.

Ah foolish Choice of Treasures here!
 Ah fatal Love of tempting Gold!
 Must this base World be bought so dear?
 And Life and Heaven so cheaply sold?

6.

In vain the Charms of Nature shine,
 If this vile Passion governs me:
 Transform my Soul, O Love Divine,
 And make me part with all for thee.

Com-

Common Metre.

1.

THUS far 'tis well: You read, you pray,
 You hear God's Holy Word,
 You hearken what your Parents say,
 And learn to serve the Lord.

2.

Your Friends are pleas'd to see your Ways,
 Your Practice they approve;
 Jesus himself would give you Praise,
 And look with Eyes of Love.

3.

But if you quit the Paths of Truth,
 To follow foolish Fires,
 And give a loose to giddy Youth
 With all its wild Desires:

4.

If you will let your Saviour go,
 To hold your Riches fast,
 Or hunt for empty Joys below,
 You'll lose your Heaven at last.

5.

The Rich Young Man whom Jesus lov'd
 Should warn you to forbear:
 His Love of earthly Treasures prov'd
 A fatal Golden Snare.

6.

See, Gracious God, Dear Saviour, see
 How Youth is prone to fall:
 Teach 'em to part with all for Thee,
 And love thee more than all.

The

The Hidden Life of a Christian.

1.

O Happy Soul, that lives on high,
While Men lie groveling here !
His Hopes are fix'd above the Sky,
And Faith forbids his Fear.

2.

His Conscience knows no secret Stings,
While Grace and Joy combine
To form a Life, whose holy Springs
Are Hidden and Divine.

3.

He waits in secret on his God ;
His God in secret sees :
Let Earth be all in Arms abroad,
He dwells in heavenly Peace.

4.

His Pleasures rise from Things unseen,
Beyond this World and Time,
Where neither Eyes nor Ears have been,
Nor Thoughts of Mortals climb.

5.

He wants no Pomp, nor Royal Throne
To raise his Figure here ;
Content, and pleas'd to live unknown,
Till Christ his Life appear.

6.

He looks to Heaven's Eternal Hills,
To meet that glorious Day ;
Dear Lord, how slow thy Chariot-Wheels !
How long is thy Delay !

Near-

Nearness to God the Felicity of Creatures.

1.

ARE these the happy Persons here,
Who dwell the nearest to their God?
Has God invited Sinners near?
And Jesus bought this Grace with Blood?

2.

Go then, my Soul, address the Son,
To lead thee near the Father's Face;
Gaze on his Glories yet unknown,
And taste the Blessings of his Grace.

3.

Vain vexing World, and Flesh, and Sense,
Retire while I approach my God;
Nor let my Sins divide me thence,
Nor Creatures tempt my Thoughts abroad.

4.

While to thine Arms, my God, I press,
No mortal Hope, nor Joy, nor Fear,
Shall call my Soul from thine Embrace
'Tis Heaven to dwell for ever there.



The Scale of Blessedness; or, Blessed Saints,
Blessed Saviour, and Blessed Trinity.

1.

Ascend, my Soul, by just Degrees,
Let Contemplation reve
O'er all the rising Ranks of Bliss,
Here, and in Worlds above.

2. Blest

2.

*Blest is the Nation near to God,
Where he makes known his Ways :
Blest are the Men whose Feet have trod
His lower Courts of Grace.*

3.

*Blest were the Levite and the Priest,
Who near his Altar stood ;
Blest are the Saints from Sin releas'd,
And reconcil'd with Blood.*

4.

*Blest are the Souls dismiss'd from Clay,
Before his Face they stand :
Blest Angels in their bright Array,
Attend his great Command.*

5.

*Jesus is more divinely blest,
Where Man to Godhead join'd,
Hath Joys transcending all the rest,
More noble and refin'd.*

6.

*But, O what Words or Thoughts can trace
The Blessed Three in One !
Here rest, my Spirit, and confess
The Infinite Unknown.*

Appearance before God here and hereafter.

1.

While I am banish'd from thy House,
I mourn in secret, Lord :
“ When shall I come, and pay my Vows,
“ And hear thy holy Word ?

2. So

2.

*So while I dwell in Bonds of Clay,
 Methinks my Soul should groan,
 " When shall I wing my heavenly Way,
 " And stand before thy Throne ?*

3.

*I love to see my Lord below,
 His Church displays his Grace ;
 But upper Worlds his Glory know,
 And view him Face to Face.*

4.

*I love to worship at his Feet,
 Tho' Sin attacks me there ;
 But Saints exalted near his Seat,
 Have no Assaults to fear.*

5.

*I'm pleas'd to meet him in his Court,
 And taste his heavenly Love ;
 But still I think his Visits short,
 Or I too soon remove.*

6.

*He shines, and I am all Delight ;
 He hides, and all is Pain :
 When will he fix me in his Sight,
 And ne'er depart again ?*

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